

# Wild

AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

Winter (Jul-Sep) 2007, no. 105 \$7.99 incl GST [www.wild.com.au](http://www.wild.com.au)



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## DEPARTMENTS

### 5 EDITORIAL

Park protection: a priority

### 7 WILDFIRE

Letters to the Editor

### 15 INFO

A farewell to Andrew McAuley, Tasmanian bushfires, the 'crazy Belgian's' unsupported walk across Tasmania's World Heritage Area, and a round-up of bush running and Trailwalker results

### 17 WILD DIARY

What's on, and when

### 37 FOLIO

The winter moods of Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park, by *Gil Hayes*

### 50 TRACK NOTES

*Peter Franklin* takes us on a three-day walk along the Leeaberra Track in Tasmania's Douglas-Apsley National Park

### 57 GEAR SURVEY 1

The upside of down: a sleeping bag survey by *John Chapman*

### 65 GEAR SURVEY 2

*Zac Zaharias* surveys trekking poles

### 73 EQUIPMENT

The 'world's fastest microfilter', headtorches, mountain tents and more

### 75 TRIX

*Karmen Teahle* on smelling sweet in the bush

### 77 GREEN PAGES

Including more on Tasmanian logging, the pulp mill proposal and the Wielangta court ruling, coal mining in the Hunter Valley and logging in Victoria's national parks

### 85 REVIEWS

Guidebooks to the Northern Territory and Lamington National Park

### 88 WILD SHOT

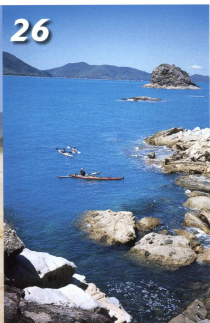
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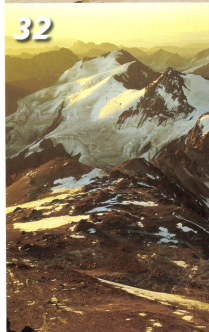
21



26



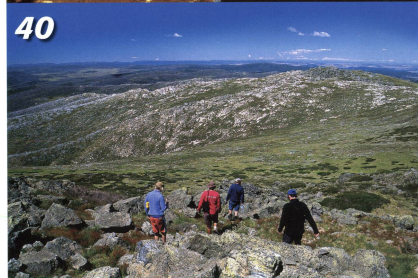
32



44



40



## FEATURES

### 21 **A GREAT OCEAN WALK**

*Bron Willis* explores the new track along Victoria's Shipwreck Coast

### 26 **CLIMATE CHANGE EFFECTS**

*Cam Walker* outlines how our wild places will be altered

### 32 **ACONCAGUA**

*Adrian Miller* on the difficulties of climbing the highest peak outside the Himalayas

### 40 **THE JAGUNGAL WILDERNESS**

Alpine ghosts in the Snowy Mountains, by *Anna Warr*

### 44 **BORN TO BE WILD**

*Quentin Chester* profiles Chris Baxter, founder of *Wild* and *Rock* magazines

**Wild**

AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

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#### WARNING

The activities covered in this magazine are dangerous. Undertaking them without proper training, experience, skill, regard to safety, and equipment could result in serious injury or death.



**Cover** Martin Doran pauses below the pinnacle of the Thumbs, the Upper Florentine Valley, Tasmania. Behind, Packers Spur leads the eye across the valley and the Strathgordon-Lake Pedder road towards Mt Mueller in South-west Tasmania, an area in Forestry Tasmania's firing line. *Kevin Doran*



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# Park protection

## A priority

**DEFINITIONS CAN BE SLIPPERY THINGS.** You only need to find archaic-seeming listings in a decade-old dictionary to realise that a word can mean more than you imagine and change more fundamentally—and more quickly—than you think. This is especially true of phrases based upon a whole framework of legal and political decisions open for constant reinterpretation. For example, definitions of a national park differ markedly, depending on their source. While the *Australian Oxford Dictionary* listing, 'an area of natural beauty protected by law for the use of the general public and the preservation of flora and fauna', seems largely beyond dispute, other authorities have other ideas. The New South Wales National Parks & Wildlife Service dispense with conservation altogether in this description on its web site: 'National Parks are relatively large areas protected for their unspoiled landscapes and native plants and animals. They are set aside for public education and recreation...'


While these and other definitions share certain elements, they often diverge on the question of purpose. What are national parks first: a recreation ground or a conservation area? While environmentalists and nature lovers highlight the conservation outcomes, political focus seems to be on access and its vote-winning friends, development, economic benefit and employment.

Once an area gains national park status it is widely seen as safe; development is prohibited and natural values are protected—aren't they? In fact, as can be seen from a number of cases outlined in Green Pages in this issue alone, this is not always the case. Even without repealing park status, governments can approve the building of luxury cabins or allow massive swathes of forest to be logged to create huge firebreaks of dubious fire-prevention value. There are many other obvious recent examples of developments in national parks, such as the exclusive Emirates

resort in Wolgan Valley, NSW. This will encroach on 40 hectares of Wollemi National Park, for which the developer has 'swapped' 115 hectares of other land.

But there are hundreds of other areas with undisputed conservation values that have failed to achieve national park protection because of the profitable resources they contain and the consequent opportunities for exploitation. From the national parks whose ragged boundaries exclude valuable logging areas, and the forests too steep to cut down yet cynically listed as those 'saved' in Tasmania after the last federal election, to World Heritage-value valleys that contain endangered flora and fauna but are excluded from the abutting Tasmanian World Heritage Area, it is politics, not conservation, that has determined the status of many of our wild areas.

Noise pollution from helicopter flights, construction in national parks, marina developments with the potential to damage protected marine ecosystems—many of the issues reported in *Wild* over the years can seem relatively unimportant when seen at a distance, in isolation. But for first-hand witnesses, the diminishment of wilderness appeal that results from inappropriate development can seem to desecrate an entire region—and this is only a personal reaction, without considering the cost to the environment. The decisions that allow these things to happen should not be seen as isolated, or as having little bearing on society: they form part of a pattern of putting nature last, of placing development and the economy ahead of environmental protection.

There are all sorts of competing demands on public land, and a correspondingly large number of reserve types and definitions. However, national park status is difficult to obtain and should offer the highest levels of protection. Our vigilance is required to prevent this from being eroded. National parks are set aside for conservation and they should be managed with this as the first priority. 

Megan Holbeck

[editorial@wild.com.au](mailto:editorial@wild.com.au)

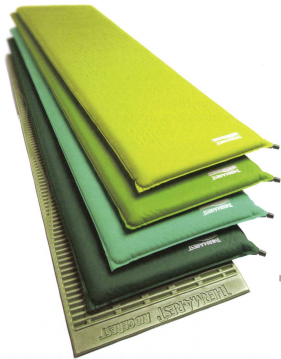
*Taking some time out from the  
Australian Climbing Festival held over  
Easter in the Blue Mountains, NSW,  
to visit Govetts Leap. Jen Stone*





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# Open for adventure?

## A balancing act on a wobbly line

**IN WILDFIRE IN WILD NO 104** CHRIS BAXTER reported on preferential access for commercial operators to areas within the Grampians National Park. Prolonged closures were also a talking point after the extensive 2003 fires... For six months or more it was a common experience for walkers and skiers to set out for a weekend only to be confronted by taped barriers and inexplicable warnings... Rumours spread that Parks Victoria (PV) was simply paralysed by fear of liability. The theory runs: something big happened; unless PV does something back, someone out there will claim negligence. As lawyers like to say, for the avoidance of doubt, close up shop. Whatever the reason, one unfortunate effect was that many people began disregarding these closures. There will be times when land managers have good reason to restrict access so they should preserve their credibility.

But there is another subtle but telling lesson... For three years Adventure Victoria has been arguing against the imposition on the outdoors community of the industry-led Adventure Activity Standards (AAS). One of our points has always been that... AAS will eventually affect public access to public land. Parties with an interest in the AAS have always responded that land-managing departments have no power to restrict access at all, let alone to discriminate between types of visitor. Of course they do. Chris provides us with an example.

Rod Costigan  
Adventure Victoria  
Kew, Vic

I'm rather confused about the article 'Wilsons Promontory Wilderness?' in the autumn edition (*Wild* no 104). I have had a love affair with the Prom for many years, and love bushwalking and 'being out there' by myself. But at the same time I am acutely aware of the importance of following the rules put in place to protect such places. Did Travis Easton have special permission to, in his words, 'bush bash' around the coast of our Prom? With the number of annual visitors to the park, does he recommend that all the walkers to the outposts follow in his footsteps?

I empathise with his enjoyment of the experience but it is through personal sacrifice that we will preserve our wilderness; by not doing some things that we want to do in order to keep areas pristine for flora and fauna. There are other, wilder places that don't have the weight of so many visitors in which we can have an adventure.

I know it was fun: I love those experiences too, but in the right places.

Maree Eagles  
Belgrave Heights, Vic

The 'Bushwalking' section of the 2002 Wilsons Promontory National Park Management Plan states: 'Off-track walking... is currently managed through a permit system. Visitors to all areas of the park are encouraged to practice minimal impact camping and bushwalking techniques during their stay.'

as it is an extremely difficult and dangerous walk that few could complete safely; indeed, it was a walk on which I nearly came to grief myself...

Obviously a balance needs to be struck between access and conservation. I personally believe that denying access completely is not a



"This sounds like a great place for a bushwalk.."

I totally agree that indiscriminate use is not in the best interests of the park and that access should be managed through a permit system. However, in my experience such permits effectively don't exist unless a scientific justification is attached. So, no, despite efforts, I did not have 'special permission'... In my opinion a few visits a year to such places would make zero impact and I observed no impact off track.

I wouldn't recommend that all walkers to the Prom follow in my footsteps for obvious environmental and safety reasons. The use of the word 'bush bashing' is unfortunate. 'Off track' would better describe what I did, as the only significant bush bashing I did was 'on track' in the north section of the Prom on the Lower Barry Creek track. I would estimate that 98 per cent of my 'bush bashing' was on granite and sand and therefore did not impact on the environment. In fact, I believe the routes I took around Monkey Point and Mt Singapore would have less impact on these 'pristine areas of flora and fauna' than the prescribed 'on track' routes. I am keenly aware of minimum-impact bushwalking techniques and the majority of the remaining two per cent of off-track walking I did was on existing animal pads... I also stated that the walking 'drew on the skills I'd developed during many years of rock-climbing and gorge walking'. I said this specifically to discourage others from trying it,

balance. That said, in future I will refrain from publishing such articles that could be used in ways that run counter to the ideals of wilderness preservation to which I aspire.

Travis Easton  
Croydon South, Vic

### Navigating the smoky haze

I'm not too sure that the leech repellent (Trix, *Wild* no 104) is a good idea. My guess is that the leeches don't like the nicotine from the tobacco, so it does make an 'environmentally friendly' insecticide after all. But it can also be absorbed through the skin—if you are not a smoker, you might want to avoid it...

But I think I'll use it, I'll just carry fewer cigarettes with me.

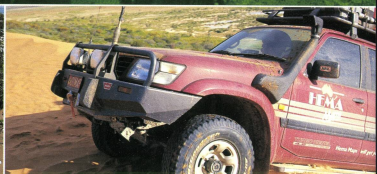
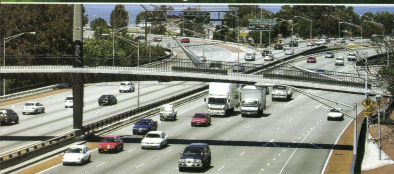
Brian Jinks  
Altona Meadows, Vic

Thank you for continuing to produce a magazine of the highest quality for the outdoors enthusiast. I read with interest Paula Atkinson's article on navigation in the summer 2007 issue (*Wild* no 103); however, I feel that a point of clarification must be made regarding the process of undertaking a resection.

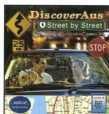
When conducting any map and compass navigation, there is a difference between north on a map (grid north) and north shown on

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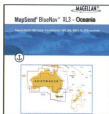
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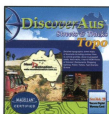
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a compass (magnetic north), known as magnetic variation. A compass will align itself to the local geomagnetic field, which is generally aligned to magnetic north. Across Australia, magnetic variation is generally to the east (and is shown as a positive number); except for southern Western Australia where it is to the west (and is shown as a negative number).

To convert from a compass (magnetic) bearing to a map (grid) bearing for a positive magnetic variation, the magnetic variation is added (*magnetic to grid add*). To convert from a map (grid) bearing to a compass (magnetic) bearing for a positive magnetic variation, the magnetic variation is subtracted (*grid to magnetic subtract*). For a negative magnetic variation, the opposite is true. Thus if a compass (magnetic) bearing of 135° is shot to an object, the magnetic variation must be added to that bearing to plot it on a map.

Jason Selman  
Mudingburra, Qld

I've recently found a great new tool for planning walks. It's called Forest Explorer and is produced by the DSE. You can custom-make maps, complete with contours, walking tracks and forest types. While no replacement for Vicmaps, these maps are useful for investigating the area where a walk is planned.

To access it, log on to [www.dse.vic.gov.au](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au), click the link on the left, 'forests', then click 'maps', then click the right-hand link 'forest explorer online—interactive maps'. While the tool can be a little difficult to use at first, it is very useful.

Nick Montgomery  
Armadale, Vic

## Beauty in the eye of the beholder?

*Wild* no 92 contains a letter from me with an image secured from the summit of the Sentinels in Tasmania's South-west showing



View from the Sentinels towards the Upper Florentine Valley. Kevin Doran

a view over the World Heritage and Conservation Areas—not to mention the National Park—disfigured (in my opinion) by logging

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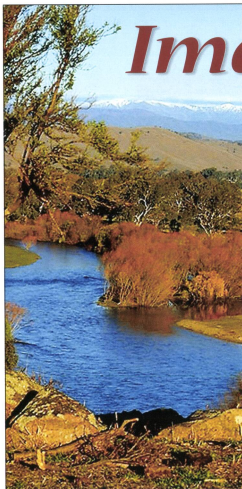
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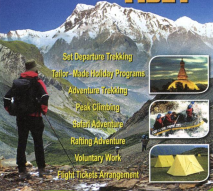
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Photo by Trevor Street

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# Wild

AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

## INDEX

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## tasmanian expeditions

SMALL GROUP ACTIVE HOLIDAYS



Brian Hughes on the summit of Mt. Oakleigh looking across to Mt. Pelion West along the Overland Track.

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activities. I now enclose a shot, taken just over three years later, looking from the top of the Sentinels towards Clear Hill and the Thumbs in the Upper Florentine.

Also attached is an image *[not reproduced]* taken from the Hartz Mountain National Park showing logging roads on the flanks of the South Pictons above the Farmhouse Creek track. These (to some of us) grubby, greedy, grabbing fingers seem to be reaching for the Cracroft valleys, Mt Hopetoun and Federation Peak itself. If the walls where the Mona Lisa is hung were covered with 21st century graffiti, I would probably think it inappropriate but some would no doubt think otherwise.

A retired forester recently told me that reliable studies of growth rings in the trunks of celery top pines suggested the whole of Tasmania's South-west was burnt out in the early 17th century, no doubt following lightning strikes, which are now increasing in frequency again. So why not harvest as many trees as possible before nature destroys them all?

Kevin Doran  
South Hobart, Tas

In 2000 (*Wild* no 78), *Wild* published an account of the Pokhara-Muktinath tea-house trek in Nepal, which I repeated in 2004, 2005 and 2006 with friends...In discussions many years back I was told that the track would be maintained as a walking route because this was in the best interests of the villages...

Towards the end of 2005 there wasn't any indication that a road might be constructed, but in December 2006...a road between Pokhara and Muktinath was already well advanced. There wasn't yet a connection to the existing roads near Pokhara and there weren't any cars or trucks on this new road. However, motorcycles flown in to Jonson already interrupted the otherwise quiet scenery...

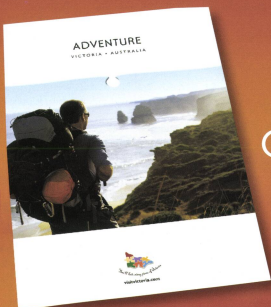
Based on construction since 2005, it seems very likely that by the end of 2007 trucks will have access...Not all of the walking track is buried under the new road, but...walking will no longer be a real possibility.

Most lodge owners strongly oppose this development. It seems obvious that, apart from those in some villages with particular points of interest where tourist busses might stop, most will be deprived of an income that they have enjoyed for many years.

Six weeks ago I wrote to the Nepalese tourist authorities and pointed out the concern expressed by many who will be affected...but received no reply. I understand that road constructions are also under way between Pokhara and Manang but I don't have detailed news. Anybody planning to walk in the Pokhara-Muktinath area should obtain up-to-date information.

Jürgen Keim  
Mt Ruiney, Tas

Readers' letters are welcome (with sender's full name and address for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email [editorial@wild.com.au](mailto:editorial@wild.com.au)



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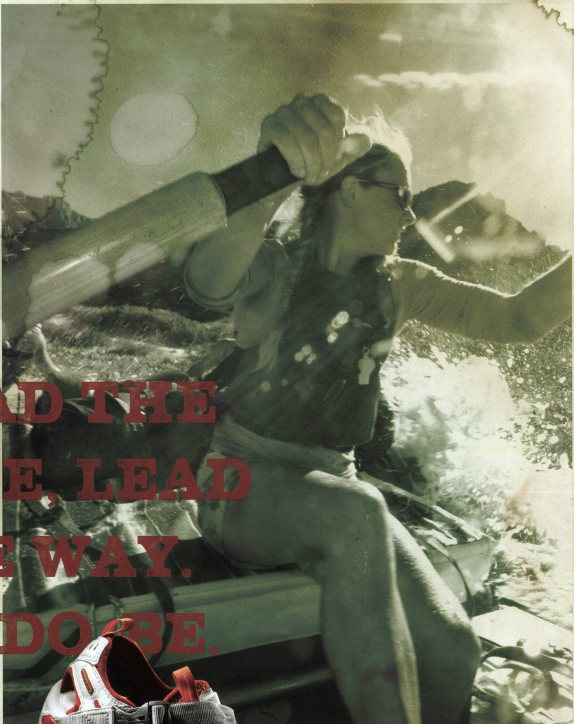


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Photo by Chris Rainer



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# Andrew McAuley, 1967–2007

**Greg Caire** farewells an old friend

Andrew McAuley was destined for a life of adventure. When I first met him in Albury-Wodonga in the late 1980s, he was an accountant starting his first job after university at a pet food cannery. At the time there were only three climbers in Albury, us two and expatriate American Bob Cowan. Weekends were filled with new routes at obscure crags nearby and in the imposing Mt Buffalo Gorge. At this time Andrew made a very early solo, midwinter ascent of the famous, 280 metre long route Ozymandias—possibly a first but never recorded. He had a strong passion for adventure from an early age; this remained with him, providing a meaningful direction for the rest of his life.

In the winters of 1988 and 1989 Andrew would frequently disappear to Blue Lake in the Snowy Mountains to hook up with good friend Armando Corvini, which fuelled his growing interest in ice-climbing and mountaineering. Many weekends we would be down a climbing partner as he cajoled his clapped-out 1100 Datsun up the dirt-surfaced Alpine Way, eventually cresting Dead Horse Gap after the odd slide into a ditch,

slewing on the ice-glazed roads in the early morning hours.

In 1991 he attempted a bold route on Aguja Poincenot (3600 metres) in southern Patagonia with a close friend. An accident near the summit after a major lead fall left his partner with a head injury, and an epic retreat and rescue ensued during a storm. Rap anchors were scarce and they ran out of slings: he had to bite through a rope's core to fashion slings as their fake Swiss army knife proved ineffective. After a safe descent, Andrew's climbing companion was airlifted to hospital. (This experience, entailing a dangerous descent in stormy weather while nursing an incapacitated climbing partner, gave Andrew knowledge that helped him to save the life of Corvini on Ama Dablam years later.) I met up with Andrew in southern Brazil after he left Patagonia. We explored the climbing and the sights of the southern gorges and walls, and did some caving with locals, before going our separate ways.

I last spent time with him in 2003: a phone call out of the blue from Apollo Bay indicated that Andrew had just arrived and needed a bed in Melbourne for the night. A very understated comment alluded to a just completed solo paddle along the wild, western margin of Bass Strait by way of King Island. It was several days before I learned the true significance of that trip from kayaking friends. These trips led to further groundbreaking sea kayak adventures, including a solo trip across the Gulf of Carpentaria and a wild Antarctic exploration.

Andrew was driven by ego and a will to succeed at ever more challenging ventures. The ego, however, was tempered by careful consideration of the comfort of others and their individual psychological limits, which were often somewhat different to his own. Andrew's solo excursions indicated an acceptance that it was unreasonable to inflict the psychological hardship and suffering involved on a partner, rather than a single-minded drive to succeed at all costs.

Although audacious in scope, the attempt to cross the Tasman that claimed his life was by no means a

foolhardy venture. It was a meticulously planned and calculated leap into the unknown, redefining what was humanly possible in mountainous seas in a small, fragile craft. In the words of well-known climber Malcolm Matheson (and at the risk of paraphrasing a brand of clothing), Andrew sought to 'know fear'—that quiet moderator of behaviour that keeps our aspirations in check as we face precarious adventures.

While saddened and devastated to lose him, Andrew's parents and his wife Vicki understood his passion for adventure and accepted his drive to explore the boundaries of human endurance and endeavour. It will take his young son Finlay some time to understand and adjust to the loss. As someone who had a very wide cross-section of friends in many fields, Andrew is missed by many. His loss brings to the surface questions about the inherent risks of adventure. But, as others have commented, in this safe and tidy world there are visionaries who will always push the boundaries of what is possible so that others might follow more safely in their footsteps. Andrew was one of those latter-day explorers who open up new horizons and redefine what is humanly, physically and psychologically possible.

## David Noble with some thoughts on Andrew McAuley

I never went on any of Andrew's epic trips—his climbs in the Himalayas and Patagonia or his solo kayak voyage across the Gulf of Carpentaria. Our trips together were more the usual days or weekends in the Blue Mountains, canyoning and mountain biking. For these tamer outings he was great company. It didn't matter whether the trip was easy or hard; Andrew simply had a great love for wild places.

The last trip we did together was in the canyons of the Blue Mountains in August 2006. It was then that I heard of his audacious plan to paddle across the Tasman Sea. Andrew had very carefully researched currents, weather patterns, how to sleep in the kayak and a host of other things. He knew it would be dangerous, but he would not have attempted it had he not thought he could pull it off. At the end of our day of canyoning we went back to Andrew and Vicki's house in the mountains. Some of us had a beer or two, but not Andrew. He said he was in training for his big trip and his next beer would be in New Zealand, after he paddled in. Sadly, this epic voyage was his last great adventure. That he was so close to succeeding before he disappeared shows that it is indeed possible.

Andrew will be missed, not only by his family, but also by his wide circle of friends.



**Andrew McAuley on the Spirit of Sydney en route to Antarctica.**  
Stuart Trueman



# Fires, closures and evacuations

## Grant Dixon reports on late summer fires in Tasmania

More bushfires followed those reported in *Wild* no 104, with greater impacts on popular Tasmanian walking areas. They were ignited by lightning strikes accompanying thunderstorms that spread across southern and western Tasmania on 16 February, and resulted in the closure of major walking tracks. The fires incinerated more than 45 000 hectares of wilderness, mostly in the South-west. There were also concerns for residents of Cradle Village due to blazes west of Cradle Mountain.

The strikes in the South-west occurred at Cracroft Plains, in the remote Olga Valley and on Terminal Peak. Hot and windy conditions helped the two blazes to spread considerably. The Cracroft fire ultimately burnt 16 000 hectares, including the entire Cracroft and Arthur Plains, most of the east-facing slopes of the Western Arthur Range, some forest below Mt Picton and fingers of the alpine zone north of Mt Hesperus. The Olga Valley fire consumed more than 28 000 hectares of button grass and mixed forest, burning south-east to the foot of the Proposing Range and into the headwaters of the Davey River, as well as up to the crest of the Frankland Range from the west.

At first, the remote location, the scale of the blazes and the amount of resources deployed elsewhere prevented authorities from doing more than monitor the South-west fires. However, concerns that the Cracroft fire might spread into rainforest and alpine areas perhaps unburnt for thousands of years led to the deployment of remote-area fire crews and water bombing. All walking tracks in the vicinity of the Arthur Ranges, Frankland Range, Arthur Plains and Huon Track were closed soon after the fires ignited, and some 40 walkers were evacuated from these areas by helicopter. The walking tracks were not reopened for almost six weeks.

Before these fires, there was a taste of what was to come when lightning ignited a bushfire in the Fury Valley, ten kilometres west of Cradle Mountain, in mid-January. There was a risk that the blaze would burn into the alpine area, so the northern part of the Overland Track was closed for a couple of days and some 90 walkers were relocated by helicopter. Water bombing by helicopter, the work of remote-area fire crews and rain meant only 90 hectares were burnt.

A number of fires occurred elsewhere. Large blazes on Bruny Island (2500 hectares burnt, extending into South Bruny National Park) were started by lightning, while a fire in the north-east of King Island (burning 12 500 hectares) started on private land. The latter blaze incinerated the entire Lavinia Nature Reserve, much of which burnt six years ago. The reserve is now ecologically devastated.

# The 'Crazy Belgian's' Tasmanian adventure

## Louis-Philippe Loncke is lucky to be alive

Last year I came up with my 'Wild mountains' project—an attempt to cross the entire Tasmanian World Heritage Area while climbing 15 peaks. With the help of the Tasmanian bushwalking community, in only a month I was prepared for the adventure. I was nicknamed the 'Crazy Belgian' as I wanted to go alone and unsupported, without food drops. Being from Belgium, I had obviously not much experience of the hazards of the wilderness I would encounter.

I left Cradle Valley with food for 40 days, all my supplies contained in a 59 litre dry bag strapped to a 55 litre pack. The total weight was 49 kilograms. The route I followed began with the 'easy' Overland Track: the idea was to link famous tracks with off-track walking to access the chosen mountains.

Walking alone is mentally hard, especially for such a long time in an area where bad weather can have a strong negative effect on your progress. Fellow walkers always encouraged me. Some even asked for autographs or a picture, while others proposed food, but I accepted only advice and smiles.

My main objective was Federation Peak, which turned out to be easy with the skills I had built. However, the day before the ascent I woke up with a swollen calf. I thought it wasn't serious and it would go down after a few days. I was wrong. I spent the last 18 days walking with a swollen calf and numb toes. Twice, I was so depressed I stayed in my tent for 40 hours.

I soon realised that I would need more than 40 days to get out, and divided my rations in half. Finally, after several delicious nightmares I changed my plans. I

decided to escape instead of climbing the final summit—I was too weak and battered. To save my life, I followed the Salisbury and New Rivers to the South Coast Track. I focused on my friends, family and chocolate. I finally arrived at the



*Louis-Philippe's feet on day 33: only 16 days to go...Below, weighed down in the Denison Range.*

Both photos Louis-Philippe Loncke

ranger's office at Cockle Creek 49 days after I set out, and ten kilograms lighter.

Back in Belgium, a mountaineering doctor diagnosed that my calf and toes were affected by 'trench foot'. If untreated, this infection can turn gangrenous and result in amputation. Two months after the end of this adventure, I am slowly recovering, swallowing 15 pills a day. I can't wait for the day when I will go back to the wilderness. For more information, visit [www.Louis-Philippe-Loncke.com](http://www.Louis-Philippe-Loncke.com)



# Trailwalker Melbourne 2007

Yvette Petersen reports

In hot conditions, local team the Dashing Divas took line honours in the 2007 Trailwalker Melbourne. Covering the 88.5 kilometre course in 10 hours, 44 minutes, the team—Alison Bryant-Smith, Nelly Conus, Alice Kemp and Anne Zigos—made history by being the first all-female team to win a Trailwalker event. It was Australia's largest ever Trailwalker, with 592 teams of four braving 37°C temperatures and torrential rain. Competitors were even bussed for one section of the race, between Femtree Gully and Olinda, because a fire ban led to the closure of part of the course. Next up is Trailwalker Sydney, on 24–26 August. This year's event will take place on a new course, starting at Chowder Bay in Mosman and winding north to finish at the Hawkesbury River.

*The Dashing Divas—Anne Zigos (left), Alison Bryant-Smith, Alice Kemp, Nelly Conus—celebrate being the first all-female team to win a Trailwalker event. Michael Efford*



## Wild Diary

Wild Diary listings provide information about rucksack-sports events and instruction courses run by non-commercial organisations. Send items for publication to the Editor, Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181. Email [editorial@wild.com.au](mailto:editorial@wild.com.au)

### June

**State Championships 24 hr R**  
30 June–1 July, WA  
[www.wa.rogaine.asn.au](http://www.wa.rogaine.asn.au)

### July

**High Plains Tour 5/10 km S**  
14 July, Vic  
[www.hoppet.com.au](http://www.hoppet.com.au)

**ACT/NSW Junior/Senior Championships S**  
14–15 July, NSW  
[www.hoppet.com.au](http://www.hoppet.com.au)

**State Junior Championships S**  
21–22 July, Vic  
[www.hoppet.com.au](http://www.hoppet.com.au)

**Charles Derrick Memorial 10/15 km S**  
28 July, Vic  
[www.hoppet.com.au](http://www.hoppet.com.au)

**Australian Championships R**  
28–29 July, NT  
<http://frogaine.asn.au>

**Australian Senior/Masters Championships S**  
29 July, NSW  
[www.hoppet.com.au](http://www.hoppet.com.au)

### August

**Nordic Cabramurra Tour 5/15 km S**  
4 August, NSW  
[www.hoppet.com.au](http://www.hoppet.com.au)

**Hotham to Dinner Plain S**  
4 August, Vic  
[www.hoppet.com.au](http://www.hoppet.com.au)

### Metrogaine 5 hr R

5 August, ACT  
<http://act.rogaine.asn.au>

**KAC Cross-country Classic S**  
8 August, NSW  
[www.hoppet.com.au](http://www.hoppet.com.au)

**Snowy Mountains Classic S**  
11 August, NSW  
[www.hoppet.com.au](http://www.hoppet.com.au)

**Australian Junior/Senior Sprint Championships S**  
11 August, Vic  
[www.hoppet.com.au](http://www.hoppet.com.au)

**Bullfight Charge 5/8 km S**  
12 August, Vic  
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**St Phillack Cup 5/8 km S**  
12 August, Vic  
[www.hoppet.com.au](http://www.hoppet.com.au)

**Australian Junior/Senior/Masters Championships S**  
18–19 August, NSW  
[www.hoppet.com.au](http://www.hoppet.com.au)

**XPD 3rd Edition M**  
20–31 August, Qld  
[www.gar.com.au](http://www.gar.com.au)

**Trailwalker Sydney B BR**  
24–26 August, NSW  
[www.oxfam.org.au/trailwalker/sydney](http://www.oxfam.org.au/trailwalker/sydney)

**Kangaroo Hoppet, Birkebeiner and Joey Hoppet S**  
25 August, Vic  
[www.hoppet.com.au](http://www.hoppet.com.au)

### State Championships 24 hr R

25–26 August, SA  
[www.sa.rogaine.asn.au](http://www.sa.rogaine.asn.au)

**Spring 24 hr and School Championships R**  
25–26 August, WA  
[www.wa.rogaine.asn.au](http://www.wa.rogaine.asn.au)

### September

**CCSC Kosciusko Tour S**  
2 September, NSW  
[www.hoppet.com.au](http://www.hoppet.com.au)

**World Canoe Marathon Championships C**  
8–9 September, Hungary  
[www.canoe.org.au](http://www.canoe.org.au)

**State Marathon Championships C**  
15–16 September, Vic  
[www.canoe.org.au](http://www.canoe.org.au)

**State Marathon Championships C**  
22–23 September, Qld  
[www.canoe.org.au](http://www.canoe.org.au)

### October

**State Championships 24 hr R**  
20–21 October, NSW  
[www.nswrogaining.org](http://www.nswrogaining.org)

**State Championships 24 hr R**  
27–28 October, Vic  
<http://vra.rogaine.asn.au>

### November

**State Championships 8/24 hr R**  
24–25 November, Tas  
[www.tas.rogaine.asn.au](http://www.tas.rogaine.asn.au)

### December

**AROC Adventure Race M**  
15 December, NSW  
[www.arocsport.com.au](http://www.arocsport.com.au)

### January 2008

**50 Hour AR Expedition M**  
24 January, NSW  
[www.arocsport.com.au](http://www.arocsport.com.au)

### February

**Cradle Mountain Run B BR**  
2 February, Tas  
[www.cradleultra.org](http://www.cradleultra.org)

**AROC Adventure Race M**  
9 February, NSW  
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**AROC Adventure Race M**  
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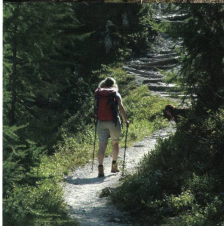
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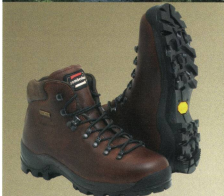
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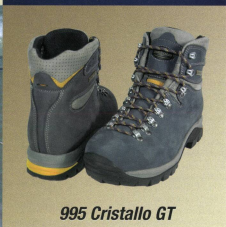
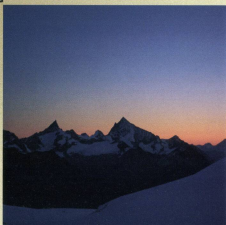
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# Bush running round-up

John Harding reports on Tasmania's Cradle Mountain Run

The 82 kilometre Overland Track from Cradle Mountain to Lake St Clair is one of Australia's finest bushwalks—or bush runs. The scenery is spectacular but the summer weather can be treacherous, ranging from temperatures in the 30s to fog, mist, and



Allan Hood near Kiara Hut on his way to coming second in the Cradle Mountain Run. Peter Dargaville

daily falls of centimetres of rain. The hills are steep and the mud can suck your shoes off. In early January 2007 sections of the track were closed due to a bushfire nearby (see Grant Dixon's report), but by 3 February downpours meant slow running conditions: the record time of 7 hours, 25 minutes was not under threat. Paul Mackenzie finished first in 8 hours, 46 minutes, 38 seconds, with Allan Hood second in 9 hours, 7 minutes, 52 seconds and Dave Heatley a further half minute behind. There are usually several female entrants, but this year only experienced veterans Ally Martin and Dale Lancaster took part. Both completed the course successfully, Martin in 12 hours, 59 minutes, 42 seconds and Lancaster in 14 hours, 1 minute, 35 seconds. The 2008 run will be held on 2 February.

## Many feet on the Six Foot Track, by John Harding

With more than 800 competitors, the 45 kilometre Six Foot Track Run in the Blue Mountains is Australia's largest mountain run. It was first held in 1984 to mark the centenary of the opening of the Six Foot Track, a bridle trail leading from the his-

torical 'Marked Tree' at Katoomba to the Jenolan Caves.

There is spectacular scenery along the course, which ascends 1528 metres and drops 1788 metres. The run raises more than \$30 000 each year for the New South Wales Rural Fire Service and the Six Foot Track Heritage Trust. The race is the principal selection event for the World Long Distance Mountain Running Championship, so it attracts a strong field of local, national and international entrants.

This year's cooler-than-usual weather proved a boon for participants, with Sydney Strider Tony Fattorini setting a new record time of 3 hours, 24 minutes, 12 seconds. Terrigal's Matthew Robbie came second in 3 hours, 26 minutes, 59 seconds and Sydney ultra-running international Jonathan Blake placed third in 3 hours, 30 minutes, 35 seconds. Victoria's Isobel Bepalov was the fastest female in 4 hours, 11 minutes, 30 seconds; former world triathlon champion Jackie Fairweather of the Australian Capital Territory was next in 4 hours, 14 minutes, 57 seconds, a couple of minutes in front of Brisbane veteran Hubertien Wichers. The next Six Foot Track Run will be held on 8 March 2008.

# S C R O G G I N

## Federation death

On Easter Sunday, Michael Skirka, a 38-year-old father of two from Hobart, fell to his death while descending from Federation Peak in Tasmania's South-west. Federation Peak is well known for its difficult-to-reach summit; access to the top requires some tricky and often unroped scrambling above massive drops. Shortly after the fall, Skirka's walking partner set off a personal distress beacon; however, in failing light the police were unable to retrieve his body until the next day.

## More news on huts in the Australian Alps

The Kosciuszko Huts Association reports that more huts have been confirmed burnt by the recent bushfires. In the Howqua area, Mt No 3 Refuge is gone, while the Barry Mountains area lost Cropper Creek and Ryans Hut. In the Licola area, Traralgon High School Camp, Snowy Range Airfield huts and Horseshoe Flat Hut are gone. Unconfirmed reports that Bindaree and Upper Jamieson Huts had been burnt appeared in *Wild* no 104; these huts are now believed to be safe.

## Another Blue Mountains death

Following on from the deaths reported in *Wild* no 104, another person has died while bush-

walking in the Blue Mountains. A Marsfield accountant was missing for more than a week before his body was found on 15 April. He headed out for a four-day, 45 kilometre walk in the Kanangra-Boyd National Park during the Easter long weekend and failed to return. According to reports in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 16 April, it appears that the man fell 30 metres down a canyon. He was not an experienced bushwalker and, according to other walkers, had only a very basic, hand-drawn map and seemed confused about which way he was headed. The Kanangra-Boyd National Park is an exceptionally rugged area.

## Caving records

*Wild*'s special advisor for caving, Stephen Bunton, informs us that in early April he bottomed Australia's deepest cave, Tachycardia, with Alan Jackson, who was responsible for much of the cave's exploration. Tachycardia is 375 metres deep. Bunton is the first person to have bottomed all five of Australia's most recent deepest caves while they held that record: Khazad-dum (-275 metres, 1976), Ice Tube-Growing Swallet (-354 metres, 1984), Annea-Kananda (-373 metres, 1984), Niggly Cave (-375 metres, 2000) and now Tachycardia (-375 metres, 2007). See article in *Wild* no 85 and Info in *Wild* no 103 for more details.

## National parks added to National Heritage list

In December 2006, the then Minister for Environment & Heritage, Ian Campbell, announced that five national parks had been placed on the National Heritage list. These are Royal National Park and the adjoining Garawarra State Conservation Area (NSW), Warrumbungle National Park (NSW), Kuring-gai Chase National Park (NSW), Gramscians National Park (Victoria) and Stirling Range National Park (Western Australia). Their listing is intended to help in the preservation of these unique areas. 🌞

## CORRECTIONS AND AMPLIFICATIONS

On page 43 of *Wild* no 103, an error was made in the box entitled 'Resections and back bearings'. When converting magnetic bearings to grid bearings you have to add the magnetic variation found on the map legend, not subtract it. Marriots Falls, which appears on the cover of *Wild* no 104, is located in Marriots Falls State Reserve, not in the nearby Mt Field National Park.

Readers' contributions to this department, including high-resolution digital photos or colour slides, are welcome. Items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Pahrnan, VIC 3181 or email editorial@wild.com.au



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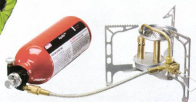
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# A Great Ocean Walk

Bron Willis explores the new track along Victoria's Shipwreck Coast

**THE TOWERING GIANTS OF LIMESTONE THAT ARE** the 12 Apostles pose like celebrities, patiently holding their stance for the daily procession of tourists. These rock islands are possibly Victoria's most iconic natural attraction and are indeed remarkable, but they do steal the limelight; there is an entire supporting cast of spectacular scenery all along this coastline.

Westward, as far as the eye can see, turbulent water thrashes against weather-worn rock. The ocean transforms every shade of blue into frothing white caps. Each headland is mirrored by the next and the Cape Otway lighthouse watch far out of sight.

The good news is that this wonderful coastline now has its own show: the Great Ocean Walk. Opened in December 2005, the track stretches from Apollo Bay around Cape Otway to the Glenample Homestead, in view of the 12 Apostles. Local bushwalkers have roamed along here for years, inventing day walks and overnight trips: in *Wild* no 89 Stuart Coleman related his trip thrashing through unforgiving scrub and along cliff-tops in search of beautiful Johanna Beach, and Track Notes to the area were also published in *Wild*'s 12th issue. But the Great Ocean Walk has made the journey a whole lot easier.

The walk is the result of five years' work by Parks Victoria. It is promoted as a 'step-on, step-off' track as it often meets the road, allowing sections to be walked as day or weekend walks. But it was the multiday walk that caught my eye. I enlisted my brother Matthew and his house mate Tracey to form a bushwalking trio keen to check out the rugged coastline of Victoria's 'Shipwreck Coast'.

We decided to squeeze as many of the 91 kilometres as we could into four days—not ideal considering the walk is designed as an eight-day, seven-night trip. Skipping the first two legs from Apollo Bay cut our journey by 20 kilometres. We left Tracey's car at the

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*The author on the beautiful, remote Johanna Beach, one of the walk's highlights. All photos Matthew Hollingworth*



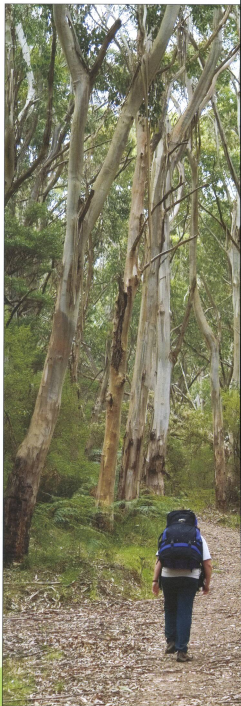


The next morning, Matthew seemed surprised at the extra bits I'd managed to squeeze into my pack. As a koala guarding the tree above the toilet block watched our departure, Matthew delivered the wounding comment that I had a long way to go before I'd achieve true lightweight packing. Climbing the bluff towards Parker River inlet, I made a mental checklist of everything I'd brought. The only possibly extravagant item was a whole tube of toothpaste—and perhaps the luxury pair of fleece pants. I secretly wondered how many pairs of undies my brother had packed.

In the confusion of roadworks at the car park we missed the turn-off to the Cape Otway lighthouse. We found ourselves instead at a little cemetery where the graves of lighthouse keepers' families and shipwreck victims

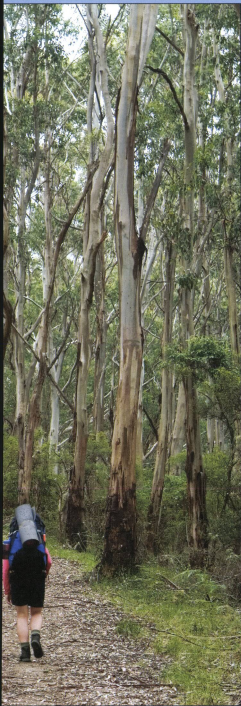
Our bodies protested as we traversed the windy slopes down to Station Beach, the sandy track hard on our calves. The ocean breeze brought cool relief when we reached the flat beach below, but the soft sand did no such thing for our legs. Tracey and I tested a theory that Matthew's hard work in front, compacting and hardening the soft sand with his footsteps, would reduce our workload. It was a success: we covered ground slowly but steadily along the beach. Matthew was our Pied Piper and we happily followed.

Many of the 'walk-in' campsites along the Great Ocean Walk are shared with 'drive-in' sites accessible by road. The walkers' campsites are separate from the car campers—to avoid ruining the sense of isolation, I suppose. Often, however, we found the 'drive-in' sites to be pleasant and spacious, nicer than the walking ones. We opted for the car camp



**Right**, following the Old Coach Road through the forest behind Johanna Beach. **Far right**, lunch near Devils Kitchen on the last day of the walk—it's a tough life!





that night and shared our soft, grassy spot with only a few others. An after-dinner stroll allowed closer inspection of the beach, where dark shapes revealed themselves as decayed wooden pylons standing like statues in the sand.

Matthew and I were alone on the beach, our conversation dawdling from the past to the future. It's something I love about walking: the moments when there's nothing much to do but chat, or lie back and watch the clouds. Meanwhile, Tracey had stayed behind and watched a sedan bog itself predictably in the loose sand of the river bank. 'Fools!' we thought.

Speaking of fools, I had ignored the wise voice in my head that told me that she who camps next to a swampy creek shall be eaten alive. The next morning's packing-up procedures were performed with much haste and foot stamping, and I regretted my choice of campsite for itchy weeks to come. Matthew and Tracey suffered only one or two evil midge bites. I'm not sure what the magic ingredient is in my blood that makes me such a tasty morsel for any flying, biting creature, but by the end of the day I was covered in angry red welts radiating heat all over my body.

The day had more in store for us than midges. A limited time frame for the walk had demanded creative planning: in order to reach our car by Sunday night we had to fit in another day of more than 20 kilometres of walking. We'd ambitiously entertained the idea of covering the 27 kilometres from Aire River to Ryans Den on day two, despite quiet yet reasonable doubts from all. We agreed to assess our progress at lunchtime and decide upon the best plan then.

Sporting blisters, sore shins and dodgy knees, we made slow progress up and down along forbidding sea-cliffs. The scenery was starting to seriously impress but it was harder going than we'd imagined. Matthew's trial of new shoes was proving unsuccessful; the next day he fixed the problem with different lacing and powered ahead in his usual fashion. Tracey's steady march offered no support for her catch cry: 'I'm not much of a walker.'

The track was demanding as it rose and fell over one bluff after another. A spiky echidna and numerous black wallabies offered distraction; so too wedge-tailed eagles and black cockatoos cruising above. We stopped at Castle Cove, where the Great Ocean Road meets the sea again after leaving it at Apollo Bay. A cavern gaped below and a pile of rocks stacked like pancakes endured the waves battering its surface. I looked out at the reef jutting out of the water between the waves and thought how well this hostile Shipwreck Coast suited its name.

One last push up Rotten Point and Johanna Beach was in view at last. An hour or so of tiring beach walking later, we were hanging out for that campsite; the beach seemed to stretch forever. We hadn't mentioned our afternoon plan. Although I had earlier thought it would be nice to get another leg out of the way, I found myself hoping that someone else would give me an excuse to put down my pack and enjoy the sunny afternoon. It took less than ten seconds to reach a unanimous decision and suddenly the afternoon ahead seemed deliciously lazy.

We walked into the drive-in campsite, which looked rather sweet. A quick dash of an extra 800 metres (minus pack) to compare the walk-in campsite confirmed our home for

❧ *On multiday walks it's easy to get into the natural rhythm of walking, eating and sleeping. Something in your brain has changed. You're on a different journey now and it's slower, more ponderous than your daily life.* ❧



the night—the walk-in view was appealing, but easy access to the beach from the car site was more so. We launched on to the grass next to a sophisticated camp including a shower tent (!) and stayed there for most of the afternoon. We lunched and lazed and spread our dew-dampened tents out to dry. Undewear and socks drying in the nearby trees added to the general appearance that we were in fact parachutists who had crash-landed in a convenient spot.

Unexpected rest periods like these are wonderful surprises: there's nothing like reading in the sun, only to fall asleep with your

book on your face. Soon the sun cooled down and took on a hazy, golden quality. We wandered down to the beach and found the tide on its way out, leaving delightful rock pools: small, circular and perfectly designed for a one-person spa. The occasional wave crept over the surrounding rock and filtered into the pool, creating the luxurious impression of being surrounded by bubbles.

I returned to the beach just after sunrise the next morning, awakened early by the fierce itching of my midge-bitten legs. Only the coolness of the sea could soothe them. Back at camp, we ate and packed in a leisurely fashion. The track took us away from the beach and inland to farmland and forest. We looked across green valleys and back to the sea, sparkling in the distance. Walking was easy along tracks, gravel and dirt roads although the hillsides had our hearts pumping as we entered the eucalypt forest. It was cool and refreshing, a pleasant change from the open sun and pounding ocean.

The hinterland shelters numerous houses, tucked away into the forested hillside and designed to take advantage of stunning views

always comfort in its companionship. Sometimes it shaped itself into rolling, surging waves that crashed on to rocks and sea-cliffs with menacing force: it seemed an angry master, enraged and unpredictable. On calmer days, its surfaces were glassy and serene. Whether wild and tumultuous or tranquil and quiet, the ocean stirred me every day of our trip.

Waiting further down the beach was something that looked like a scene from a 'Star

## THE WALK at a glance

**Grade** The walking between Johanna Beach and Moonlight Head (and, apparently, from Marengo to Shelly Beach) is hard, while the rest of the walk is easy-moderate

**Length** Six-eight days for the whole walk

**Distance** 91 kilometres

**Type** Ranges from spectacular coastal cliffs to heathland, coastal forest, beach and river scenery

**Region** Victoria's south-west coast

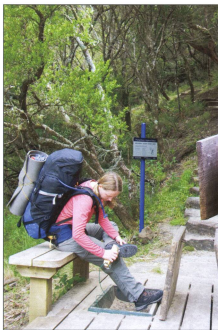
**Start, finish** Apollo Bay, Glenample Homestead

**Maps** *The Great Ocean Walk Information and Map Guide* (\$3.95) by Parks Victoria is adequate; to order, call 131 963. A 1:100 000 Meridian topographical map is also available, covering a large area without much detail, but is not essential as navigation is not difficult. The track is not marked on this map

**Web site** [www.greatoceanwalk.com.au](http://www.greatoceanwalk.com.au)

**Highlights** The spectacular, remote (and hardest) part of the walk is between Johanna and Wreck Beaches. This section includes Milanesia Beach, Ryans Den campsite, Moonlight Head and Wreck Beach. This could make a great weekend walk, with a car or bus shuttle, using the four-wheel-drive Moonlight Head Road out from Wreck Beach

**Special points** Take a tide chart with you: the route diverts at key 'decision points', where walkers decide between high- and low-tide tracks. This is crucial for a visit to Wreck and Milanesia Beaches. The walk was designed to meet roads at certain points, allowing walkers to walk the route in its entirety, in sections or as day walks. Parks Victoria also suggest walkers may take advantage of accommodation (other than tents), although this is only available at Apollo Bay and Cape Otway lightstation



to sea-cliffs and never-ending ocean. We passed one such place where a friendly scarecrow held a water cooler and cup, accompanied by a sign announcing 'water for walkers'. We remarked that this was a pleasant change from the hostilities that sometimes arise along walking routes. The owners were friendly and commented that they never got bored with the view: 'It changes every day.'

The track headed back down to the beach and once again we were looking out to the ocean. We chose a windy corner of Milanesia Beach for lunch, next to a whitewashed fisherman's shack and a surprisingly shiny four-wheel drive. How wild and gnarly this place would be in the winter, how angry the waves. The sky darkened and rain began to fall.

In dreams, masses of water are said to represent emotions. The ocean did a similar thing for me on our trip. We observed its many moods for four days, but there was



*A friendly scarecrow offers water to walkers on the road to Milanesia Beach. Left, Bron Willis making use of one of the scrub-down stations found along the walk.*

Trek' set. The rock faces were made of hard, round, granite balls, less than ten centimetres in diameter and dark in colour, embedded in a light grey, soft, smooth rock with the appearance of plaster. I'd never seen anything like it.

At the end of the beach we looked back at the waves and up at the gradient of the climb. A welcome feeling of isolation crept over me. Wooden steps guided us up the steeper parts of the climb and a well-graded track traversed through lush grass and scrub to the coastal forest above. Endless promontories protruded into the ocean below and we began guessing the location of Ryans



Den campsite. We could see Cape Volney in the distance and Matthew dared to make promises of 'only two ks to go'. I warned him not to play with my mental goalposts by making promises he couldn't keep! I found myself stopping regularly to enjoy the view below and then carrying on, excited by the prospect of the campsite. We just knew it would be good. We weren't disappointed.

This was the first of the walk-in campsites that had appealed to us. Although they all had neatly set out tent sites and lovely wooden tables, none had so far offered the ambience of the drive-in sites in the perfect weather.



*Tracey Edmonds and Matthew Hollingworth sup in style at the Ryans Den campsite overlooking Cape Volney. **Right**, 'decision point' signs outline options at key junctions along the walk. **Far right**, Bron Willis on the headland west of Aire River, with Cape Otway behind.*

Ryans Den was an exception. The forest offered welcome shelter and the campsites, each with its own wooden table, were pleasantly scattered among the trees.

I claimed the penthouse suite, campsite number eight, which I awarded five stars for its ocean views. There was a grassy knoll with such expansive views that we spent much of the evening and some of the next morning there, imagining what lay under the waves and waving at the small boat that rocked from side to side with each passing swell. The three of us watched a glorious sun go down over the cape.

I began to feel the sense of freedom that develops as days pass on a multiday walk. Most of my trips are on weekends, squeezed between workdays, and really only long enough to whet the appetite. On multiday walks it's easy to get into the natural rhythm of walking, eating and sleeping: you get up

in the morning and look around. Something in your brain has changed. You're on a different journey now and it's slower, more ponderous than your daily life. You listen to your surroundings and your body gets into a rhythm. You notice bird calls and look around to find out which bird they belong to.

Our next day's destination demanded an early start and we were up to watch the sun again as we munched on the last of our breakfasts. The packs were light, which was fortunate; our decision to stop at Johanna Beach on the second day left us with a long day to finish, with 23 kilometres remaining

this beach: rusty anchors fixed to the reef stand as monuments to the ill-fated vessels.

The ascent at the far end of Wreck Beach was hard work in the hot sun. After a quick water stop at the pleasant Devils Kitchen campsite, the spectacular coastal scenery gradually ended, replaced by uninspiring scrub. We headed west along the Old Coach Road through sandy terrain and began the dusty homeward straight. Bunions screaming, blisters pulsing, we mused that, no matter how long or short, how hard or easy a walk, you always feel the pain in the last few kilometres. As the track rounded the top of the last hill, the Gellibrand River came into sight, followed by Tracey's car.

After the primary concerns of finishing a walk—gleefully throwing down packs, ripping off boots and tearing off smelly T-shirts—

## Bron Willis

is a new Melbourne writer who loves getting into the outdoors, putting a pack on her back and putting one foot in front of the other. Her favourite bushwalking spot is just a ferry ride away across Bass Strait.



to our car at Princetown Recreation Reserve. We'd opted out of the last section to Glenamely Homestead, keen to shave five kilometres of what looked on the map to be tedious walking. Before long we'd passed Cape Volney and were on our way to Moonlight Head and down to rugged Wreck Beach.

This was another reason for our sparrow's-fart start: walking the coastal route to Wreck Beach depended on low tide, which for us was at 10 am. These 'decision points' are labelled clearly at key points on the track and map and walkers must decide, upon consultation with a tide chart, whether the coastal route is safe. We'd found many warnings to be rather conservative, but some routes were impassable at high tide. Descending countless steps to the eastern end, we were glad we'd made the effort. Low tide had left behind bright green, seaweed-covered reef. The remains of two shipwrecks remain on

we packed our things, washed our faces and prepared for the homeward drive. But there was one last stop: those famous 12 Apostles. Matthew had seen them before and wasn't that interested; Tracey hadn't and was keen to go. I remembered feeling like a sheep in a flock on my last visit but was still curious to see them again.

At the car park we were surrounded by civilisation: flushing toilets, people wearing jeans and girls in high heels. We hobbled along the polite, even, concrete track out to the 12 Apostles and stared at the limestone stacks. Then we turned around and looked in the other direction, imagining a white speck on a peninsula far away: the Cape Otway lighthouse, standing sentinel over many miles of Southern Ocean. ☉

# Climate Change EFFECTS

**Cam Walker outlines how our wild places will be altered**

LIKE MOST *WILD* READERS, I LOVE OUR MOUNTAINS. While the Australian Alps might 'throw off apologies, not shadows' because of their meagre altitude and limited area, they nurture me in a way no other ecosystem does. Every now and then I head off overseas for a fix of higher peaks but, once I'm back home, whether at Mt Stirling for the weekend or on the annual back-country ski trip in the Snowy Mountains, I feel at home in a profound way. The Australian Alps and mountains of Tasmania feel 'right' in a way that no other place does.

As *Wild* readers know, global warming threatens the survival of these wonderful and unique places. When the bushfires started before Christmas in 2006, my first thought was: 'Please, not Mt Howitt.' Since the intense fires of 2002–03 devastated much of the eastern ranges of the Victorian Alps, the wonderful forests of the Howitt Plains and Macalister Springs are even more special. But it's hard not to see more frequent fires in the High Country as part of the mosaic of our climate-change induced future.

If we do nothing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions the prognosis is grim, not only for the Alps but for many of Australia's iconic areas, from the Great Barrier Reef to the forests of south-west Western Australia. The good news is that public opinion is shifting and people are becoming increasingly engaged and active on the issue. The key message percolating through the community is that early action to cut emissions will reduce the impacts on people and ecosystems. Decisive action now will mean we can continue to explore and cherish what we currently have, rather than risk a future where the Barrier Reef and deep snow are simply distant memories.

## AUSTRALIA AND GLOBAL WARMING

Much of the warming in the earth's atmosphere since 1950 has been due to human activities that have increased levels of greenhouse gases. This is known as the enhanced greenhouse effect and is leading to climate change. Since pre-industrial times, atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) levels have increased by 35 per cent as we burn ever more fossil fuels, intensify our resource use and modify natural ecosystems. Ice-core records indicate that the current level of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere is

higher than at any other time in the past 650 000 years.

This has resulted in an average global temperature increase of around 0.7°C in the last 100 years. This doesn't sound like much, but it is already causing changing, more extreme weather conditions around the world. The manifestations of climate change include more intense tropical storms, the spread of tropical diseases such as malaria, droughts, bushfires, floods and rising sea levels. There is uncertainty about how great the future effects of climate change may be, but there is enough scientific knowledge to be able to estimate some of them.

According to the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), it is likely that average global temperatures will increase by between 0.7 and 2.5°C by 2050, and between 1.4 and 5.8°C by 2100. This increase will drive many of the changes we will see in coming decades. The actual level of increase will depend on how effectively we respond, as individuals and nations, to the imperatives of global warming.

While climate change modelling is becoming more accurate at predicting future impacts, it needs to be remembered that it is just that—predicting the future. This is partly why variations in predictions can be so large. However, with every year scientists are becoming more confident in their assessment of likely future impacts.

This feature seeks to outline some of the probable impacts of climate change on iconic areas loved by *Wild* readers and suggest effective actions.

## WHAT IS COMING FOR AUSTRALIA?

Using global climate model simulations, the CSIRO has projected future climatic conditions in Australia. Predictions include:

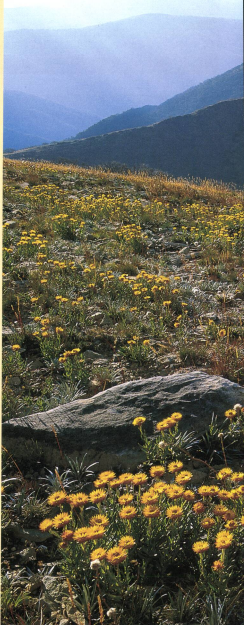
- an increase in average annual temperature of between 1 and 6°C over most of Australia by 2070;
- an increase in the average number of extremely hot days and a decrease in the average number of extremely cold days;
- a decrease in annual average rainfall in the south-west, parts of the south-east and Queensland;
- an overall drying trend due to increased temperatures and evaporation, and changes in rainfall.

## PLACES WE LOVE

### The Australian Alps

The Alps stretch from the snow-gum woodlands of the Baw Baw Plateau along the Great Divide through Victoria, across the Snowy Mountains and almost to the outskirts of Canberra. With snow cover common above 1400 metres in winter, skiing is possible across extensive ridge-top and plateau areas, with glorious walking at other times of the year. In global terms, this area is tiny, with the true alpine area of the Main Range covering just 250 square kilometres.

These mountains are both diverse and unique, with animals and plants found nowhere else on the planet. Even compared with the higher, more rugged mountains of other continents, Australia's alpine environment is superb. For instance, imagine you are standing on the Bluff in the Victorian Alps in late spring. Silver daisies and pale everlastings are starting their show among the snowdrifts, scattered among the silver-grey of poa grass tussocks and the twisted trunks of wind-blashed snow



gums. Behind is a shallow, spring-fed valley full of succulent plants and snowdrifts and beyond, over the deep trough of the Upper Jamieson, the reddish, rocky ridgeline of Mt McDonald rises, eucalypts growing almost to the summit and bare earth showing through. Above, you may hear the call of a lone raven, but more often there is only the silence of the mountains. Truly Australian, truly unique.

### Likely threats

Mountains are considered especially sensitive to climate change. The high snow country is all at risk; as temperatures rise, the alpine ecosystems will be pushed further up the mountain, potentially 'falling off' the top as they run out of suitable habitat. As the tree line begins to move, alpine habitats will become smaller and smaller 'islands'. Some studies predict that the lower margin of the true alpine environment on Mt Bogong will rise from around 1750 metres to 1900 metres—and the top of the mountain is only 1986 metres above sea level. In the Snowy Mountains, the alpine environment may be forced up to around 2000 metres. Much of our true alpine habitat may even-

tually disappear. In the short term, some specific high-level communities such as tall alpine herbfields, heathland and tussock grassland may increase in area as others, such as the short alpine herbfields, contract. (To visualise these latter habitats, think of the exposed summit ridges on mountains such as Mt Bogong and Spion Kopje.) While some animal and plant species will move uphill from the forested foothills into what is at present the alpine zone, others will be lost as their habitat conditions disappear.

The mountain pygmy possum is one of the many animals at extreme risk from global warming. Alpine resort development has been affecting the species for a long time; its population is already down to 2000 individuals and continuing to decline. The likely impacts on less 'charismatic' animals, such as the invertebrates found in alpine streams, are still poorly understood. Warmer conditions are also expected to bring new weed species and predators into the higher elevations, further impacting on the indigenous species that are being pushed beyond their optimum temperature limits.

This loss of alpine conditions will of course affect snowfall. According to the CSIRO, average snow depth in the Australian Alps at the start of October has already declined by 40 per cent in the last 40 years. It is expected that as the earth warms snowfall will decrease and the spring melt will come earlier.

With a warming of 0.6°C above what we have already experienced, winter snow-coverage will be reduced by 15–20 days for those areas that presently get good cover through most winters. In terms of the footprint of this snow—that is, the amount of land actually under snow for much of the winter—under this minor warming scenario we could lose more than a quarter of the currently skiable snowpack. A further 0.3°C increase in average temperature could cause a shrinkage of snow cover by up to 40 per cent. In the short



*Snow-covered snow gums in Baw Baw National Park will become a rare sight due to the effects of climate change. Paul Sindair. Left, Conversely, bushfires are expected to become more frequent, making views of burnt mountains, such as this shot of the Razorback from Mt Hotham, Victoria, 12 months after the 2003 fires, more common. David Tatnall*

term, lower areas such as Victoria's Lake Mountain and the Baw Baw and Buffalo plateaus are expected to become marginal for skiing by 2020.

There is a real risk that we could lose all large areas of skiable snow cover in the Alps by the middle of the century. The CSIRO says that a 2.5–3.5°C increase could lead to a reduction in total snow-covered area in the Alps of up to 85 per cent, with a major decline (up to 98 per cent) of the so-called 60-day covered areas (that is, high-elevation areas that at present have snow cover for two or more months annually).



## Tasmania

Anyone who has walked in Tassie knows of its diversity: it has an enormous array of animals and plants that are not found anywhere else. Most of the variation in Australia's alpine flora is found in Tasmania. The state's alpine areas are small: alpine and subalpine country make up 1270 of a national total of 11 500 square kilometres that presently receive regular winter snow.

The Central Plateau and scattered mountain ranges have a wide range of largely isolated alpine and subalpine regions. The Labyrinth

is one example, much loved by generations of walkers, where glacial lakes are mixed with forests of deciduous beech and pencil pine and exposed, rocky mountain ranges.

### Likely threats

One key threat comes from the likelihood that Tasmania will experience more regular bushfires as a result of a gradually warming climate. Unlike much of the Australian landscape, the mountains of Tasmania are less adapted to fire—dead pencil pines scattered throughout the mountain areas alert walkers to this fact. The type of fire season we have

just witnessed in Tasmania may become more common.

As in the Alps, the species at greatest risk are those already at their climatic limit, which may be simply 'pushed off' the top of the ranges. In Tasmania much of the mountainous terrain is relatively isolated, meaning species will have greater difficulty migrating and hence surviving.

Regional variations in the level of change will be evident even in a small place such as Tasmania. For instance, by 2040 rainfall will probably decrease, especially in the north-east, although it may increase slightly in the south-west. There may also be a very small increase in winter and spring rains overall, but not sufficient to offset the expected drying at other times. The west may experience slightly wetter autumn and winter months.

In terms of our enjoyment of Tassie, minimum winter temperatures are likely to increase, affecting the already mediocre snow conditions. Landscapes are likely to suffer from more fire damage, with subsequent loss of old growth forest, and tighter controls on access to highly fragile and at risk areas are very possible.



**Left,** the diverse alpine flora of Tasmania is likely to be threatened by higher temperatures. Anne Range, Southwest National Park. Grant Dixon.

**Below,** 'much of the mountainous terrain is relatively isolated', including the Anne massif. Rob Blakers



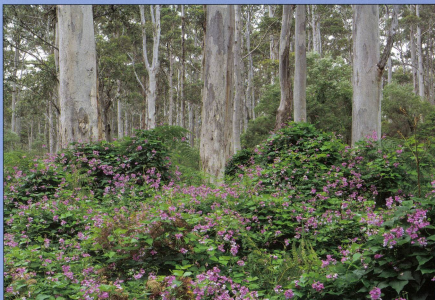
## The forests of south-west WA

The forests of the south-west sit as a green blaze on the far corner of a vast and dry land mass covering the western third of the country. They form the only official global biodiversity hot spot in Australia, defined both by exceptional levels of plant endemism (uniqueness to a place) and serious levels of habitat loss. The forest, woodlands, shrub lands and heath of the south-west are all characterised by high endemism among both plants and reptiles. Unique vertebrate species include the numbat, honey possum and red-capped parrot. The western swamp turtle, which hibernates for nearly eight months of the year in response to dry conditions and hot temperatures, may be the most threatened freshwater turtle species in the world. These areas have already been subjected to massive clearance of native vegetation for agriculture.

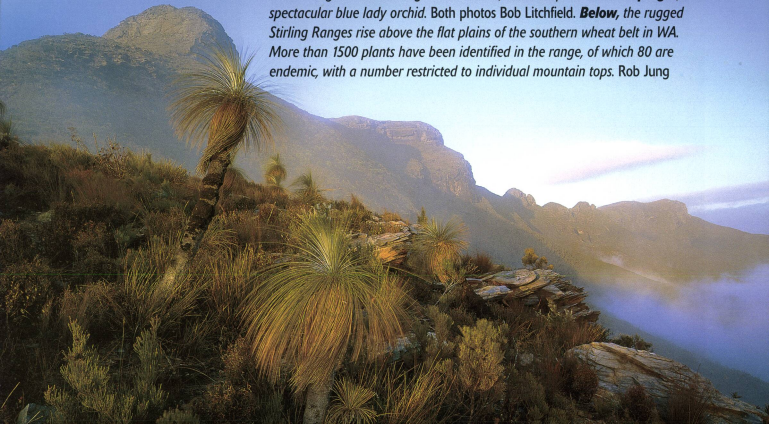
### Likely threats

According to the IPCC, this region is considered particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. This is partly because forest covers only a small area of land, hemmed in by oceans and drier mallee and wheat belts. Many of the region's unique plant species are at risk from global warming: for example, the *Dryandra* genus (a member of the family *Proteaceae*) has specific soil requirements and occurs in limited areas, and 92 species of this genus could be seriously threatened by a global temperature increase of as little as 0.5°C.

For walkers, the tall forests of the south-west are only part of the drawcard: it is the overall mix of these ecosystems and the wildflowers that attracts people. According to some studies, a 'significant number' of WA frog, mammal and plant species could become restricted to small areas or disappear altogether with the warming already experienced. As in other forested areas threatened by increased fire frequency and intensity, we risk losing much of the old growth.



**Top**, the tall forest mix in Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park, WA, karri trees and hardenbergia. Debra Doenges. **Above left**, WA's unique numbat. **Top right**, the spectacular blue lady orchid. Both photos Bob Litchfield. **Below**, the rugged Stirling Ranges rise above the flat plains of the southern wheat belt in WA. More than 1500 plants have been identified in the range, of which 80 are endemic, with a number restricted to individual mountain tops. Rob Jung





## Top End

The World Heritage listed wetlands and escarpments of Kakadu National Park are one of our most iconic landscapes. This wild country is doubly special because of the ongoing land management being carried out by Aboriginal traditional owners. While walking in the region is a 'once in a lifetime' adventure for many outdoors enthusiasts, its popularity is growing. Like other ecosystems, Kakadu and the rest of the Top End will be affected by climate change.

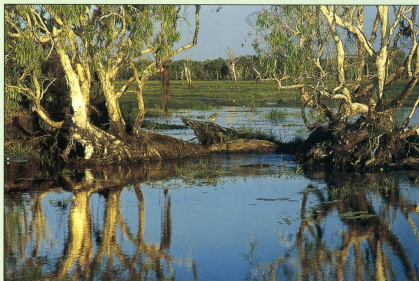
### Likely threats

According to the IPCC report released in early 2007, sea levels are expected to

rise by between 18 and 59 centimetres this century. As a result, vast flood plains in northern Australia, including Kakadu, are at risk from saltwater inundation. This is expected to impact on freshwater-dependent species such as swamp grass and paperbark trees, and already appears to be changing the distribution of long-necked turtles.

Warmer, drier conditions are likely to increase bushfire, which in turn will alter the make-up of woodlands and savannas. Lower overall rainfall will stress ecosystems while increased cyclone activity is expected to increase coastal storm surges and the damage they cause. The combination of these impacts will have a noticeable impact on our Top End.

**Below,** 'the World Heritage listed wetlands (Yellow Water wetlands, top) and escarpments (near Twin Falls, bottom) of Kakadu National Park form one of our most iconic landscapes'. This region is also threatened by climate change. Both photos Warren Field



## Great Barrier Reef

The Great Barrier Reef (GBR) is truly a marvel of nature and a drawcard for millions of visitors. It stretches for more than 2000 kilometres along our eastern coast and holds more than 360 species of coral in almost 3000 coral reefs. More than half of the world's mangrove diversity is found along its mainland and island shores.

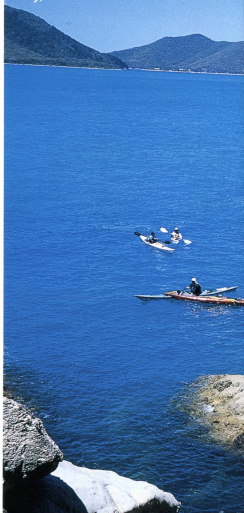
The oceans have slowed climate change by absorbing perhaps half of the greenhouse gases pumped into the atmosphere in recent centuries. However, this is slowly increasing the acidity of the waters, which in turn is expected to limit the ability of coral to grow. The good news is that the GBR is one of the best-managed reefs in the world, with large 'no take' areas and measures to rein in pollution from the adjacent mainland.

### Likely threats

While the reef itself is not expected to disappear this century, there will be many impacts in coming decades. Some of those expected include:

- increased bleaching events from warmer sea temperatures, possibly leading to death of coral;

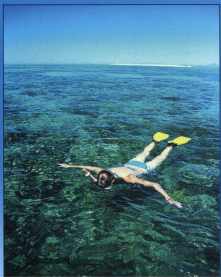
**Below,** paddling around Maryport Islet, Whitsundays, Queensland. John Wilde.  
**Right,** snorkelling off the remote Undine Cay, Great Barrier Reef. David Bristow





- coral damage from increased cyclone intensity;
- an increased load of sediments and pollutants and reduced local salinity from river outflows following stronger storms;
- weakened effectiveness of the reefs in protecting the Queensland coast from storm surges;
- flow-on impacts to the region's tourism industry.

Water temperature influences the sex of sea turtles: warmer seas would increase the proportion of females and might lead to a long-term decline in numbers. Climate change also threatens the ecosystems humpback whales require for migration, resting, calving and feeding.



## Further afield

Climate change will affect ecosystems around the planet. Examples include:

- Higher mountains in the European Alps are losing their permafrost (the North Face of the Eiger is already a rock route in many summers, with the famous ice fields all but gone).
- Glaciers are disappearing from Africa's highest ranges, including peaks such as Mt Kenya and Kilimanjaro.
- Glaciers are retreating in the Himalayas, resulting in floods in downstream areas.
- Glacier National Park in the USA could lose the last of its namesakes by 2030.

## Fires—our future?

As we look back on another devastating fire season, with much of the High Country of north-east Victoria burnt and threats to Melbourne's water catchments, we must ask if this is our future in a world of global warming. The science suggests that it is. The Bushfire Centre for Cooperative Research reports that it is difficult to fully assess the likely impact of climate change on overall bushfire threat. It warns, however, that the expected increase in overall temperature will bring more extreme 'fire weather', especially in the south-eastern corner of the continent. The University of NSW has recently warned that increased frequency of fires in the Alps will greatly affect stream flow into our main rivers because the fires will cause massive re-growth, sharply reducing run-off into streams.

## WHAT CAN WE DO?

The only struggle lost is the one that is abandoned.

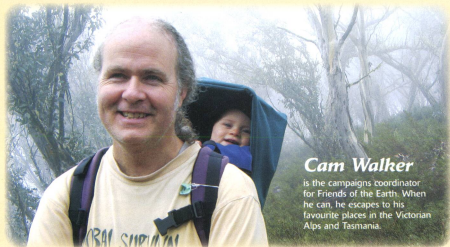
The news is grim, but the situation is not hopeless. But we do need to take action now. There is a wealth of information out there and a multitude of things at many levels that individuals and communities can do. Here is just a sample.

- Begin by measuring your ecological footprint. There are various online quizzes that pinpoint viable ways for you to reduce your impacts. A good one is Redefining Pro-

gress: [www.redefiningprogress.org/footprint/ecolFoot.shtml](http://www.redefiningprogress.org/footprint/ecolFoot.shtml)

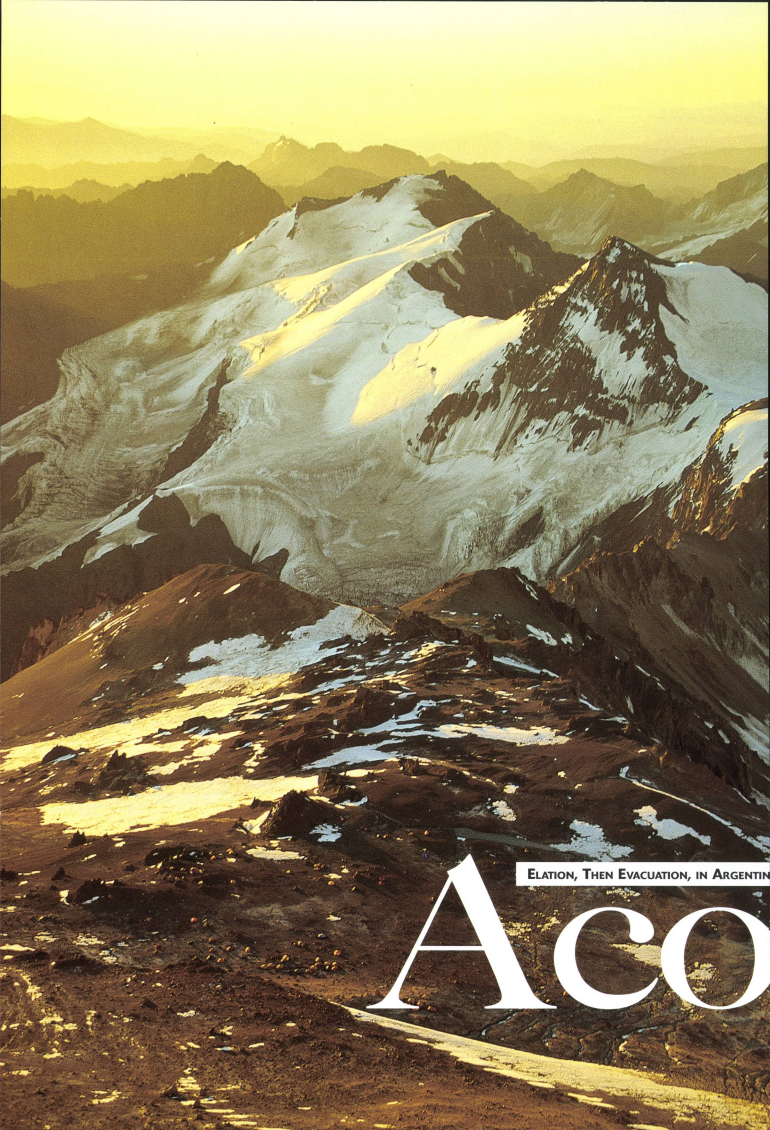
- Take a train. Cars contribute up to half the greenhouse gas emissions in cities such as Melbourne. Catching public transport will make a real difference: rail travel can produce two-thirds less than the pollution of cars. If you regularly travel longer distances for work, consider video or phone conferencing, or do one trip in every five using a more sustainable mode of transport—for example, go by train rather than by plane. (Warning: this will probably turn you into a transport activist!) To reduce emissions from your car, see [www.epa.vic.gov.au/air/vehicles/default.asp](http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/air/vehicles/default.asp) Think of doing at least one outdoors trip a year by public transport—for example, when going ski-touring, take the bus to an alpine resort and ski out.
- Switch to green power. For listings of accredited energy companies, see [www.greenelectricitywatch.org.au](http://www.greenelectricitywatch.org.au)
- Energy efficiency measures are one of the easiest and cheapest ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Buy locally made products and those with minimal packaging; look for products from sources that take less energy to produce, recycle and package—wood rather than steel, glass rather than plastic.
- Do you need that flight? Travel close to home can be great and will save a lot of emissions; a single flight from Sydney to Melbourne can produce up to 256 kilograms of CO<sub>2</sub> per person—about three times more than a train or a bus. Think about joining a carbon offset scheme such as [www.climatepositive.com](http://www.climatepositive.com)
- Check out the many climate change management and adaptation plans that have been developed by federal and state governments: a good starting point is [www.deh.gov.au](http://www.deh.gov.au)
- Support a green group: Friends of the Earth, the Australian Conservation Foundation and Greenpeace all have climate change campaigns. A good starting point for getting further information on this topic is the Australian Greenhouse Office web site: [www.greenhouse.gov.au/impacts/biodiversity.html](http://www.greenhouse.gov.au/impacts/biodiversity.html)

A fully referenced version of this article is available from the author: [cam.walker@foe.org.au](mailto:cam.walker@foe.org.au)



**Cam Walker**

is the campaigns coordinator for Friends of the Earth. When he can, he escapes to his favourite places in the Victorian Alps and Tasmania.



ELATION, THEN EVACUATION, IN ARGENTINA

# Aco



**THE HELICOPTER GAINED ALTITUDE QUICKLY,** bumping its way round in a long arcing turn, circling the extremities of base camp—the place that had been my home for the last week. To the left I could just make out the giant peak of Cerro Aconcagua (the stone sentinel). At 6962 metres, it is the highest mountain outside the Himalayas. Even in the helicopter skimming over base camp, it towered 2500 metres above us. The experience of reaching the summit only 40 hours earlier seemed like a distant dream in my current situation: strapped into the warm cockpit of a helicopter, absent-mindedly listening to the sing-song Argentine Spanish, my frost-bitten hands encased in two sets of heat-pad warmed gloves. I was leaving behind an experience that had not yet registered in my mind, but one that is easily recalled now, whenever my sensitive fingers reach for a cold beer.

It was December 2004 and Steve Appleton and I had come to Argentina to climb Cerro Aconcagua, located close to the Chilean border in the midst of the mighty Andean mountain chain. Climbing above 6000 metres had become something of a personal challenge as I had been close to this mark on different trekking trips in Peru, Nepal, Tanzania and Ecuador. So when Steve had suggested joining him in an attempt to climb Aconcagua, I jumped at the opportunity.

Cerro Aconcagua is unique for a mountain of its height. The summit can be reached by the North-west Face without any technical climbing experience, although crampons and double plastic boots are required on its upper slopes. This route, the 'Normal Route', was pioneered by Mathias Zurbriggen in 1897. Other routes, such as the Polish Glacier Route or the lines on the massive, three kilometre high South Face, are some of the

**Left,** looking down from Camp Berlin to Nido de Cóndores spread below.

All uncredited photos Leighton Donnelly. **Right,** the South Face of Aconcagua looms during the first day's walk up to Confluencia.

Adrian Miller



# ncagua

**Adrian Miller on the difficulties of climbing the highest peak outside the Himalayas**



hardest alpine routes in the world. Despite the lack of technical difficulties on the Normal Route, the extreme cold (temperatures can plummet to  $-35^{\circ}\text{C}$  on the summit) and intense, unpredictable, frequent storms, combined with the physical and psychological demands of high-altitude climbing, make it a serious challenge. Every year Aconcagua claims a number of lives. Most of these tragedies occur on the Normal Route, with only one in every four people who attempt the summit achieving their goal.

Climbers can expect to be on the mountain for at least two weeks. Most organise mules to cart their gear from the track's beginning, Puente del Inca (2725 metres), to base camp at Plaza de Mulas (4365 metres).

The first three days of trekking are largely through ochre and grey, boulder-strewn valleys, skirted by massive moraine slopes that lead to 5000–6000 metre snowcapped peaks. Even at lesser

altitudes, and carrying only day packs, headaches, nausea and shortness of breath troubled both Steve and me.

To aid in the process of acclimatisation we made a side trip from our first camp at Confluencia (3395 metres) up to Plaza Francia (4250 metres). From here we could look over the twisted, scarred and rapidly advancing Lower Horcones Glacier. The recent warmer summers had provided lubrication for this eight kilometre long river of ice to advance

to base camp was swift, sliding, skiing and skidding down steep snowdrifts and constantly moving scree. Another rest day followed to ensure our bodies had the maximum time possible to acclimatise before our push further up the mountain.

Our quest for the summit began in earnest when we returned to Plaza Canada with the rest of our gear. This is one of the most exposed places I have slept; we were perched in the nook of a rock outcrop that interrupts the mountain's relentless downward flow. But the views! We could see all the way to Chile to the west; to the north were the conical peak of Cerro Fitzgerald and the bulk of the South Gussfeldt Glacier, while base camp was spread out below. A magnificent sunset over the Pacific and all of Chile kept me transfixed until the harsh chill forced me into the confines of our small tent.

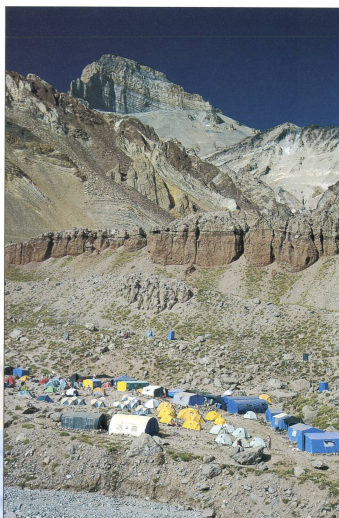
The next day we hauled our gear further up the mountain to Nido de Cóndores (Condors Nest) at 5559 metres. It was a painful day, with packs of more than 25 kilograms, stiff, double plastic boots, continual headaches, nausea and breathlessness, climbing an unrelenting scree slope at a  $30^{\circ}$  angle. It seemed like an entire day of inexorable toil, but it was only four hours later that the comforting flap, flap, flap of an Argentine flag signified our arrival at Nido de Cóndores.

By this stage of the trip we had settled into a routine on arriving at camp. Recovery for an hour, then a halting effort to put up the tent—our heads pounding—then the collection of snow for melting over the next four hours. Finally we would pop the climbers' candy, aspirin, then doze and daydream. One could feel completely at peace; absolutely nothing from the outside world

bothered us. It was only Steve, me and the mountain.

We enjoyed another rest day, spying the latter part of our summit route from our cosy position in the sun. Laid out above us was the Grand Traverse, across scree and ice, and the feared Canaleta, an unrelenting  $45^{\circ}$  slope, 400 metres in height, that led to the summit. The weather was looking better. The lenticular cloud had disappeared from the summit and the skies above us had cleared.

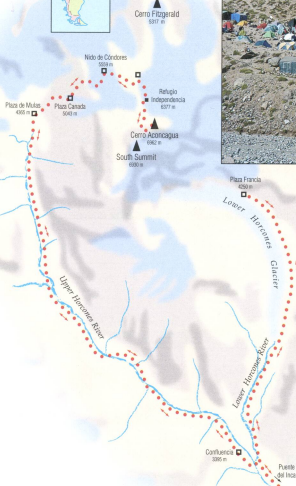
Onward and up! It had become noticeably colder, with four layers of clothing a minimum. The climb to the barren amphitheatre of White Rocks (5950 metres) only took us 400 vertical metres higher than Nido de Cóndores, but the consistent energy-sapping grade left us exhausted. By the time we arrived the wind was howling again. While erecting the tent, we faced the real danger of it being ripped from our hands and sent



**Camp at Confluencia, 3395 metres.**

almost four kilometres in four years. The real highlight of this side trip, however, was being able to occasionally glimpse our objective—the storm-blasted summits of Aconcagua, towering almost 3000 metres above us—and the imposing, impossibly steep and crevassed South Face.

After reaching base camp and taking a rest day we became the mules, climbing to 5043 metres and Plaza Canada. We cached gear there for our return in two days' time. The trip back



flying down the mountain. We secured it to rocks as the snow had blown away, leaving frozen ground. Even the simplest tasks, such as collecting snow or organising gear, became a chore as our bodies rapidly ran into oxygen deficit.

Climbing a mountain such as Aconcagua is a war of attrition. It is a constant struggle to keep your fluids up as the dry air and high altitude suck moisture from the body. Eating becomes a chore as nausea and head-

aches sap your appetite. Much of the energy from food is used to simply keep warm. Fat reserves are drawn upon for the work of climbing the mountain. I lost six kilograms in two weeks. Sleep deprivation accumulates and takes a toll. Many times I woke suddenly, panicked and gasping for oxygen in the thin air, before thrusting my head outside the tent. The body gradually weakens.

The clarity of thought I had experienced in the previous days disappeared at White

Rocks. Adrenalin pulsed through my body as I realised that the next day was summit day. We faced a 16-hour day, which included a climb of 1000 vertical metres to the summit, in air that contained only 30 per cent of the oxygen present at sea level.

At 4 am it was crystal clear. Thirty degrees below zero. We forced down porridge and hot chocolate and spent the next half hour struggling into our gear. Everything was so difficult! The stars were brilliant overhead. No moon. I felt sick.

We commenced our climb; slowly, one foot in front of the other. Three hours after leaving camp we stopped to put our crampons on at the lonely and abandoned Refugio Independencia (6377 metres), once the highest climbing hut in the world. I was seriously considering whether I could go on. The Diamox that I had taken to aid acclimatisation had left the ends of my toes and fingers tingling. Added to this uncomfortable sensation was the fact that these extremities were slowly freezing, causing me immense pain. I could not get warm. The rising sun didn't provide any heat. The brilliance of the colours, the pale yellows of the glaciers below, the deep blues of the valleys, the flaming reds of the cliffs above us—all of these were lost on me in my misery. Tears and negative thoughts welled up as I struggled with my crampons, my frozen fingers unable to complete the simple task of tying laces. I had never before given up while climbing a mountain, but felt that I had reached my psychological and physical limits. To make matters worse, all my water—my fluid intake for the entire day—had frozen in its bottles.

Another party caught us. I looked at them. Their faces were all the same: focused, thoughts cast inward, silent. Their resolve spurred me to continue.

We slogged our way upwards, the terrain changing from the ice and snowdrifts of the North-east Face to the rock and scree of the North-west Face and the Grand Traverse, the route we had spied two days ago at Nido de Cóndores. The grade lessened once we gained the Grand Traverse, but the effort did not. My foot placement was unsteady. When coming to a rest, I had to lean on my poles so as not to fall. But we were so high! Already we had reached the level of the surrounding peaks. After six hours of effort we rested in the shelter of some cliffs immediately below the Canaleta. I could not reconcile my position to those above, toiling in their own personal and immensely private quests to achieve the summit, 400 metres above us.

We began the final phase of our ascent up the 45° slope of the Canaleta. Scree gave way to a mixture of boulders, ice and snow. Footing on this steep slope, even with crampons, was uncertain. The only rhythm I could muster was three steps, then rest; three steps, then rest. I wondered how many of these sequences I had to complete to reach the summit.

I had been toiling on the Canaleta for what must have been three or four hours and didn't appreciate my elevation gain. I

■ *My mind was battling: the rational half willed me to keep going, while the emotional half commanded me to stop—to sit down, sleep, and leave behind the sound of the incessant wind and the sight of the track disappearing into a moonscape of mist and greyness.* ■



*An avalanche on Aconcagua's daunting South Face.*

rounded the top of the summit ridge abruptly and saw a flat space populated by a couple of other climbers. The summit—what a surprise! Tears, this time of relief and happiness, welled up behind my goggles. I stumbled on to the platform and collapsed, exhausted, smiling and crying at the same time—so many emotions. The wind was howling, but we were in blue sky. I had the sense to get my camera out and take a few snaps, something I had omitted to do all day—it had just seemed too hard. We were now at the top of the daunting South Face that we had sat beneath a week ago, while the *refugio* at base camp was now three vertical kilometres

the thought of twisting a knee at this altitude. The wind drove great waves of mist up the Canaleta. I felt sorry for the climbers I passed, still ascending. They would not have the reward of seeing the whole world beneath their feet.

The rest of the descent to camp three was a haze. It seemed to take forever. I failed to recognise much of the territory that we had ascended in darkness and my feeling of drunkenness slowly became worse. My mind was battling: the rational half willed me to keep going, while the emotional half commanded me to stop—to sit down, sleep, and leave behind the sound of the incessant wind and

the tent from the back. The water vapour from our breath that had frozen on the tent ceiling rained down all night, covering everything in a centimetre of ice. Snowdrifts continued to pile up outside, pushing the walls and vestibules of the tent inward. No sleep. No conversation. I was thirsty and my head pounded painfully.

The storm had not abated by morning. Both Steve and I were concerned. We had heard that storms on Aconcagua could last for a week. By midday we had had enough—we didn't want to risk being caught up there. We decided to move down to the safety of base camp. It took us more than an hour to get ready; we were weary, cramped—and always gasping for air. The vestibule was now full of snow covering our possessions. My mind was not working properly: I felt around, bare handed, to find my gear. My already cold fingertips froze and didn't thaw until much, much later that night.

We made our break. The wind was screaming and visibility was down to ten metres. With frozen toes and fingers and drunken, AMS-induced lurching, we descended 1700 metres to base camp, away from this hell. I don't know how long it took. We passed flattened tents at Nido de Cóndores, and trudged through 30 centimetres of new snow. Down in the lower valley I regained my mind, but not the warmth in my fingers.

I arrived back at base camp in a daze. The doctors in the medical tent took one

look at my six purple, swollen fingers, and ushered me inside. I did not appreciate the seriousness of my situation. I wanted to have a rest day in base camp—hang out at the climbing *refugio*, drink coffee and eat sweet biscuits—before walking out the next day with Steve. I wanted time to appreciate our achievement and adjust slowly to reality. The doctors wanted me evacuated from the mountain the next morning, worried of further damage to my fingers.

So I stayed with these compassionate guys in the relative warmth of their tent, where they spoon-fed me hot soups, rice and drinking chocolate.

My fingers slowly thawed in a saline, body-temperature solution. The 'thud, thud, thud' of the helicopter at dawn announced that it was time for me to leave.

Less than 40 hours after being at the highest point in the southern hemisphere, I was deposited at Puente del Inca. The contrast could not have been greater. Green grass, warm sunshine and a still day. I struggled to grasp where I was, and where I had been. The peak of Aconcagua—the mountain on which I had spent the last 14 days—occasionally poked its head through the cloud, giving me one last look, one last chance to witness my own personal triumph. ☀



*The esky laden mules await! Rob Baker. Right, the author celebrates finally reaching Aconcagua's summit. Miller*

below, as were all those towering mountains that had confined us earlier in our trip.

Steve emerged on to the summit as abruptly as I had. He was spent as well. We hugged, but there wasn't much energy in it.

At this stage all I wanted to do was lie in the sun and sleep. But it was cold (-25°C) and my fingers were still troubling me. The wind had increased in strength and brought with it some clouds from the west. They had already obscured Cerro Fitzgerald and were scudding across the valley, advancing on us with great speed. Five minutes later we were enveloped by cloud and mist. It was time to leave.

The descent of the Canaleta felt like a drunken affair as Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) affected me. My crampons scraped across rock, scree and snow and my body lurched backwards and forwards as I continually stumbled. The stiff plastic boots saved me from twisting my ankles, but I dreaded

## Adrian Miller

has travelled the world extensively on long, meandering escapades that have incorporated treks in the mountains and peaks of the Americas, Africa, Asia and Europe. Weekends bushwalking, camping or cross-country skiing in the Snowy Mountains and the Blue Mountains keep the insanities of living in Sydney at bay.



the sight of the track disappearing into a moonscape of mist and greyness.

The tents! I crashed into my sleeping bag, shivering and thirsty. Steve arrived soon after, palming off his down jacket and rubbing me until I stopped shivering. To be safe inside our tent and finally warm was the best feeling. Outside, the storm intensified and snow began to fall, driven against the tent like shards of ice. We were only able to melt a little snow before it became too dangerous to operate the stove, so much were the tent walls flapping.

It was a wild night. The wind moaned up the valley, smashing into the front of our tent before bouncing off a cliff and pounding





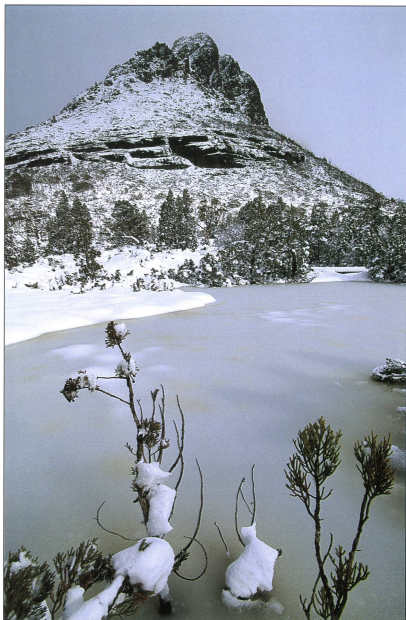
# The dust of snow

The winter moods of Cradle  
Mountain–Lake St Clair National Park,  
by *Gil Hayes*

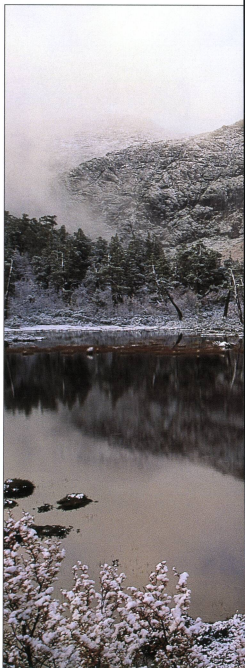
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**Left,** Cradle Mountain admires its wintry reflection.  
**Below,** sunrise over Barn Bluff, as seen from the  
summit of Cradle Mountain.





Cradle Mountain's Little Horn disguised under a cloak of snow. **Right**, this view of Mt Geryon from the Labyrinth's Pool of Memories defines the phrase 'a still winter's day'.





*Gil Hayes* has lived in Tasmania for his entire life. He has bushwalked for about 30 years, done all the classic Tasmanian walks and climbed most of the island's main peaks. Tasmania has some of the best wilderness scenery in the world and it's all on his doorstep.





# Exploring the Jag

Anna Warr encounters alpine ghosts in the Snowy Mountains

FIRST OF JANUARY 2006, 45°C HEAT. SYDNEY was hot. These were certainly not the ideal weather conditions for post New Year's Eve recovery, nor a lengthy car trip. Nonetheless, four friends—Kelly Miller, Rob Ostwald, Matt Trenouth and Bronwen Rutherford—and I began the seven-hour car trip to the Snowy Mountains. The plan was to do a three-day walk in the Jagungal Wilderness, allowing us to kick-start the new year in outdoors adventure style while giving our Canadian friends an Australian wilderness experience. After the five-hour slog down to Cooma, the temperature had dropped enough to make driving enjoyable. We headed out

through the small towns of Adaminaby and Kiandra (a ghost town) and then made our way through the eerie surrounds of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme. We stopped to eat watermelon on top of one of the dams—a somewhat bizarre activity at midnight! The orange glow of the dam lights against the surrounding pitch darkness was surreal.

Upon arriving at the start of the track at Outstation Creek, we quickly pitched the tents and dropped off to sleep. I was in a borrowed one-person tent, which retained an impressive amount of heat compared with being alone in a two-person model. By this stage the warmth

was welcome as the temperature had dropped quite substantially.

The first day of our walk dawned long before we were awake. We rolled out of our tents one by one as the heat became too intense, and were greeted by lovely blue skies and a beckoning track. A quick car shuttle, leaving one car nine kilometres back along the road at the beginning of the Round Mountain Fire Track, and then we were off.

At first the temperature was warm but not unbearable. Walking was relatively easy as we followed the gently undulating four-wheel-drive track through open alpine meadows and groves of snow gums.



# Jungal Wilderness

The scenery was picturesque; however, according to the two Canadians, it wasn't distinctively Australian—Matt seemed to think it was more like *Lord of the Rings*. All in all, it was shaping up to be a good day of walking.

Except for the flies. They had become a constant annoyance, buzzing relentlessly around our faces and ankles. Matt seemed fascinated by the proboscises on the massive March flies, so much so that for a time nearly every second word out of his mouth was 'proboscis'. (I suspect he just liked saying it.) At around 11.30 am we stopped in the shade of a snow

gum to tuck into morning tea. The flies had the same idea. They swarmed around my fruit cake when I was not busy shooing them away. They also congregated on our sweaty backs—we were wise enough to know that this was the best place for them, away from our faces and food.

As the day progressed, the temperature climbed. A crossing of the Tooma River was

most welcome as we got to dip our feet in its cool waters. After this, we were on the lookout for a good lunch spot, a search that continued for almost an hour as we struggled to find somewhere with a substantial amount of shade.

By the time we stopped, Kelly was in a foul mood. Her tolerance of flies and heat was limited, and she was not at all happy



*The five happy walkers admire the 360° views from the top of Mt Jagungal.*

**Left**, on the way down the mountain, above the flies and heat.

**Below**, Bronwen Ruth-erford ignores her sticky, winged passengers.

All photos by the author

with how far ahead Matt and Bronwen had walked. She was serious when she suggested we put up the tent to escape the flies. Fortunately, she was talked out of that plan and we had our lunch in the dappled shade on the four-wheel-drive track.

After lunch, we trundled along lazily in the afternoon heat, driven forward by the idea of a refreshing river swim. The afternoon daze was broken by shrieks of 'Snake!' and an array of profanities from Rob, who had halted a couple of metres in front of me. Being a Canadian with a mild phobia of snakes, he was not at all happy to see a decent-sized specimen in front of him. I

**“On the top of Mt Jagungal, there was a serenity we had not encountered at any other stage. The absence of flies made lounging around on the rocks a peaceful experience and it was substantially cooler, meaning that we could enjoy the sunshine without burning up.”**



stopped beside him and looked ahead: there was a one-and-a-half metre long black snake slithering away from the track and off into the clumps of grass beside it. Despite Rob's reluctance, the two of us kept going, the snake increasing in size as we walked. By the time we caught the others, it had grown by a couple of metres.

Finally it was time for that eagerly anticipated swim. Besides being incredibly refreshing, a quick dip in the river had the added bonus of providing momentary relief from the flies. As long as we could submerge ourselves in the shallow water, fly-driven insanity could be avoided.

We stopped to set up camp in the late afternoon on a small saddle near Hell Hole Creek. It was a relief to drop our packs and lie around on the grass—until we realised

its looming presence was a little ominous. Given that Mt Jagungal was still a fair distance away, we had a morning's worth of walking to ponder the fact that we planned to climb it that afternoon.

At the base of Mt Jagungal, we hit a forest of snow gums marking the beginning of our ascent. As we skirted around the western and then the northern flanks of the moun-

tain for the sweaty ascent. None of us were looking forward to such a climb in the heat. Fortunately, the temperature dropped as we rose higher, making life a little easier.

On the top of Mt Jagungal, there was a serenity we had not encountered at any other stage of the walk. The absence of flies made lounging around on the rocks a peaceful experience and it was substantially cooler,

## Alpine regeneration

Upon looking at the sea of grey and lifeless snow gums in the Mt Jagungal area, I was convinced that the January 2003 bushfires had completely devastated the region's alpine vegetation. However, after reading some literature on the topic, I was led to believe otherwise. According to Pickering and Barry (2005), 'one year after the January 2003 wildfires in Kosciuszko National Park, 95 per cent of snow gums had resprouted from lignotubers, but only 4.25 per cent had developed shoots from burnt trunks and stems'. This suggests that perhaps the barren limbs of burnt snow gums and mountain ashes only tell half the story. Lignotubers, or woody swellings of new growth from the base of the tree, are where regrowth often occurs in eucalypt species after a fire. On looking back at my photographs, I noticed that this appeared to be true: a significant amount of new growth could be seen sprouting from the base of burnt trees. It appears that the snow gums in the Jagungal area are in fact regenerating and can survive a severe fire episode. On the other hand, 'while snow gums can regenerate after three or four close interval wildfires, the trees will die if this type of fire regime is maintained over an extended period of time' (Good 2003).

### References

Both references were found in the *ACT State of the Environment Report* (2004), available online at: [www.environmentcommissioner.act.gov.au/soe/soe2004/SnowyRiver/fire.htm](http://www.environmentcommissioner.act.gov.au/soe/soe2004/SnowyRiver/fire.htm)

Good, R. (2003), 'Vegetation responses to the January fires in the mountains', notes from a presentation by Roger Good to the Snowy and Southwest Slopes Advisory Committees.

Pickering, C.M. & Barry, K. (2005), 'Size/age distribution and vegetative recovery of *Eucalyptus niphophila* (snowgum, Myrtaceae) one year after fire in Kosciuszko National Park', *Australian Journal of Botany* 53(6): 517–527.



*Burnt snow gums contrast with lush grass at the weather station marking the beginning of the climb up Mt Jagungal.*

that it was crawling with ants. Consequently, we set up tents quickly to secure an ant-free zone. Kelly, Rob and I speculated about how far away Bronwen and Matt chose to set up their tent—the excuse given involved snoring. Our last hour of daylight was spent cooking a Trangia feast and enjoying a brief period of insect-free tranquility.

When we began walking the next day, we were soon presented with distant views of Mt Jagungal. After so many gentle, rolling hills,

tain, we entered an area that had been severely burnt in the past few years. The snow gums had turned to ghosts, their grey trunks and limbs dominating the landscape against the backdrop of a vivid blue sky. Only a thin layer of grass and other ground-level greenery provided evidence of regrowth.

We reached the space-age weather station marking the point at which to ascend Mt Jagungal. Before beginning the climb, packs were dumped and food eaten to prepare us

meaning that we could enjoy the sunshine without burning up. We spent almost an hour on the top, relaxing in the sun and taking photos of the fantastic 360° views.

Reluctantly we made our way back down through the alpine meadows and along the ridgeline to the weather station. By the time we had descended halfway, the flies and heat were upon us again. So relentless! With only two kilometres to the campsite, we attempted to burn our final reserves of energy by outrun-



ring the flies—a fruitless exercise, but a good quick fix for fly-driven insanity.

According to the map, there was a hut at the next campsite. However, judging by how badly burnt the area was, I had a sneaking suspicion that it might not have survived the 2003 bushfires. Sure enough, at the campsite we found the charred foundations of O'Keefe's Hut. As the afternoon sun faded, we set up our tents near the hut remains and indulged in a well-earned evening meal.

We got going early the next morning. As we walked, I found myself dawdling a lot, the scenery enticing me to stop and take photos. After passing the ruins of Farm Ridge Hut, we climbed on to a ridgetop that we would follow for the rest of the morning. It was incredibly picturesque, with open grassy areas dotted with bright yellow flowers and ancient snow gums. Some of the dead snow gums looked quite old, as though they had experienced bushfires prior to January 2003.

Rob had another encounter with the wildlife, finding holes in the ground hiding a trapdoor spider. Being less afraid of spiders than of snakes, Rob had no qualms about poking a stick into the spider's home, just to see what would happen. A set of pincers (or fangs maybe?) popped out and grabbed

the end of the stick with a substantial pull. He taunted the spider for a minute or two before deciding to leave it in peace.

By noon, the weather had turned overcast, a pleasant relief from the heat. In the early afternoon we began the descent to the Tumut River, where we stopped for lunch and a swim. A river crossing was required before we continued along a steep, uphill track. While we were putting our shoes back on, a lovely couple came along and stopped for a chat. They had been out for two weeks already and were embarking on their final week of walking. They had just picked up a stashed food drop and had a big, white empty. Bronwen—being the 'always happy

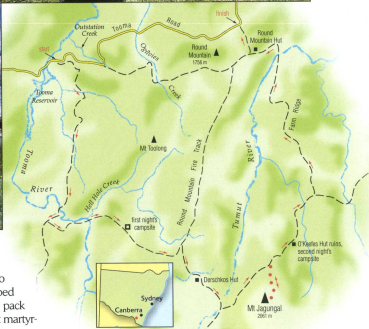
was empty; it would probably stay that way while warm summer nights made camping a more appealing option.

For the last couple of kilometres, Rob struggled to walk. His blisters had been growing since near the start of the walk and he was now in considerable pain. For the last few hundred metres he hobbled along with Kelly by his side—not a fun way to learn about wearing in leather boots! He was ecstatic to reach the parked car at last and take off his pack while we waited for Bronwen and Matt to pick up the second car.

Within minutes we were whizzing along the road on our way to Cabramurga for evening supplies and ice cream. That night we



*The laggards—Rob Ostwald, Kelly Miller and the author—pose among lush ground cover and burnt trees. Right, Mt Jagungal peeps over the hill early on the second day.*



to help out' girl that she is—offered to carry it out for them as we were so close to the end of our trip. She strapped the big, white bucket on her pack (looking a little ridiculous, but martyr-like) and continued on her merry way.

After a long lunch and a dip in the river, the massive climb in front of us looked very unappealing. Nonetheless, up we all went, knowing that the end was near. As we approached the ridgetop, we stopped to check out Round Mountain Hut. The hut seemed very dark and dingy inside, and looked as though it had been around for many years. There were old-school cooking utensils and a blackened fireplace that made me wonder on how many cold nights this hut had welcomed visitors in from the snow. However, at the moment the hut



enjoyed a beverage or two at our campsite just off the Snowy Mountains Highway. It felt like a well-earned rest after 46.5 kilometres of walking among the flies and heat. But, all in all, it had been a great trip, with good company, spectacular scenery and near perfect weather. Not a bad way to start the new year, eh? ☀

## Anna Warr

is a Sydney-based photographer working in the music industry. Her love of the outdoors began as a teenager, when canyoning, canoeing and walking with friends became a way of life.



FOUNDER FIGURE

# BORN



TO BE

# Wild

Quentin Chester profiles Chris Baxter

## ON BLACK HILL

HE MOVES SLOWLY UP THE TRACK. HIS TALL frame is slightly stooped and his breathing a little laboured. But, as massive granite tors appear among the bush, Chris Baxter ducks off the track to see what he can find. 'Come and look at this', he calls out in a voice that is a couple of notches higher than his usual gruff baritone. When I join him there's a schoolboy glint in his eye as he points to a potential climb up a dauntingly steep wall. 'All we need, Quentin', he says, invoking one of his trademark declarations, 'is someone to winch us to glory'.

On this late-winter morning in the ranges north of Melbourne, by some miracle we have stumbled across the few remaining square centimetres of cliff in Victoria that have not previously come under the scrutiny of Chris Baxter OAM, *Wild*'s founder and rock hound extraordinaire. Never mind that this 61-year-old has a life-threatening illness and a lifetime of climbing laurels on which he could happily recline. What seems to matter most at this moment is the chance to be out bush—the chance to let his imagination loose on the rocks.

At 193 centimetres tall, lantern-jawed and dark of gaze, Baxter is an imposing figure. He is methodical by nature, and his private world is carefully ordered and informed by a strong Christian faith. On some subjects he can be guarded to the point of shyness. At other times, however, he is anything but reserved. A great talker, he can quickly veer from carefully qualified observations to blistering critiques and fruity one-liners.

This vocal and physical presence is backed by an impressive record of exploits. Over a 45-year career he has pioneered more than 1200 rockclimbs and launched himself into some of the more rugged alpine terrain Australia—and the world—has to offer. The same determination that shaped these outdoor deeds also drove his stewardship of *Wild* and *Rock*—a 24-year mission that helped transform outdoors activities in Australia.

Like most *Wild* followers, I'm well aware of Baxter's contribution to these mags, including his trenchant editorials on conservation and other issues. And, like most readers, I was shocked to hear of his departure from *Wild* Publications in 2004 to confront serious illness. This news made me realise that I knew precious little of the man behind the mag. As one who has paraded his personal life in these pages, I suddenly felt like a shameless freeloader camped in the front room, a blowhard who ignores his host. It was time to redress an imbalance.

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**Left**, Chris on Blade Ridge during the third ascent of the North-west Face of Federation Peak, South-west Tasmania, in January 1966. **Right**, Chris and Sue flying the flag on Mt Jagungal, the Snowy Mountains, New South Wales. All photos Chris Baxter

Black Hill is a modest knoll of bush encircled by farmland. Our visit was meant to be a gentle 'walk and talk', but the sight of new rock meant that more than an hour was spent circling the granite outcrops and savouring the possibilities. Chris might never have been the hottest climber in the land but few have matched his enthusiasm and forensic fascination with new ground.

Some people dabble in discovery, but for Chris exploration is an article of faith and an emphatic expression of self. As a boy from suburban Melbourne he spent his holidays on Bindi Station, perched high in East Gippsland, his mother's childhood home. For Chris and his three younger brothers it was a veritable Shangri La. 'We used to roam the property by day, climbing some of the lesser peaks around the edge of the place. It was paradise as far as we were concerned—absolute paradise', he says.

Bindi Station sits in the shadow of the craggy, brooding Mt Tambo. This mountain became a childhood obsession, a mysterious summit around which his imagination whirled. In the spring 2000 issue of *Wild*, Chris wrote about a 1999 bushwalk to Mt Tambo with long-time friend Brian Walters that was the culmination of sorties in the area through the 1990s. But his first brush with the peak was as a 15-year-old with his mother and his brother Paul some 38 years earlier.

Even before he locked horns with Mt Tambo, this alpine landscape animated Chris's inner life. He relished the stories his father

told of wartime treks into the Alps, usually with just one other friend. 'They had pack-horses to carry food and the trips usually lasted a couple of weeks. What fascinated me were the names of the country: the Crosscut Saw, Terrible Hollow, Mt Buggery—I was totally in love with the concept of that country years before I'd seen it.'

The spring 2000 article quoted from Chris's boyhood account of his first climb of the Bindi summit of Mt Tambo and reproduced a hand-drawn illustration of the ridge they tackled—the final, rocky stages of which he did solo while his mum and brother waited. If his adolescent yearnings for the peak were the stuff of dreams, the journal descriptions and drawing of the actual climb reveal a fidelity to experience that became the hallmark of his later life and his work at Wild. Even from an early age, it seems, the force of reality was too important to be trifled with.

Chris and his brothers were encouraged to be free spirits. In the Baxter household, independence of thought and action were highly valued and education was everything. But his early years at Geelong Grammar were anything but happy. Cut off from home and family, he was plunged into the trials of boarding-school life. There was a lot of corporal punishment and a fair amount of bullying—you basically sank or swam', he says. 'I became a pretty angry young man.'

Salvation came in the form of mentors such as the legendary teacher Michael Collins Perse—without doubt, the most remarkable

person I've ever met'—and Timbertop, the school's famed year nine (then year ten) campus near Mansfield in the foothills of the Victorian Alps. Bushwalks along the Great Divide gave the rebellious teenager a much-needed focus. At the same time Chris immersed himself in such stirring mountaineering tales as *The White Spider*, Herman Buhl's *Nanga Parbat Pilgrimage*, and *Conquistadors of the Useless* by Lionel Terray.

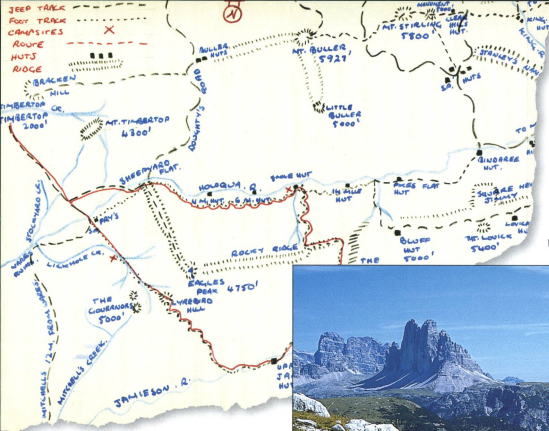
Another pivotal influence from school days was the Antarctic veteran John Béchervaise, who, when not teaching English, was leading his tyros on daring expeditions to all corners of the continent. In 1963 Chris joined a Béchervaise jaunt to the Grampians to make the first ascent of Tower Hill. The final summit push involved only a short burst of roped climbing, but it was a seminal moment in a spectacular setting. 'I was hooked', says Chris.

At a loss to satisfy this mountain fervour, his parents encouraged him to join the Melbourne Walking Club. His first club outing was to Mt Buffalo, where he fell into the slipstream of Reg Williams, a wild-eyed bushwalker who hauled Chris to the summit of the Cathedral. Though 12 years Chris's senior, Williams was a bustling enthusiast and willing mentor. He flung open the door to a heady world of gung-ho climbing and peaks begging to be bagged.

Forty years on, it is almost impossible to imagine the tantalising possibilities that lay at the feet of climbers in the mid-1960s. All the big faces in Tasmania and at Mt Buffalo







Rosea—with this mixture of awe, fascination and terror.

As stirring as the campfire yarns and verbal jousting were, Chris remained hungry for any information about climbing he could lay his hands on. He bought every back issue of UK magazine *The Climber* and avidly read about the feats of postwar heroes such as Joe Brown and Don Whillans. This absorption in the wider world of crags and peaks grew throughout Chris's years studying for an arts degree at Monash University. The famed climbing hot spots

were unclimbed. At the same time a new generation was crashing the boundaries of the climbing scene worldwide. Long regarded by the stuffed shirts of mountaineering as an inferior offshoot, rockclimbing was fast becoming a celebrated end in itself, attracting a brash subculture of rebels with ropes.

The big breakthrough for Chris came in 1965. With Reg Williams he bushwalked in South-west Tasmania and made the first ascent of Federation Peak's North-east Corner. Williams also introduced Chris to a cliff in western Victoria only recently discovered by climbers. His first climb on Mt Arapiles was a new route, Hurricane Lamp Cracks, a loping journey up the front of a pinnacle known as the Pharos.

It was the beginning of a long, intense relationship with the remarkable Mt Arapiles. More importantly, it marked his initiation into a ragtag tribe of climbers that included Peter Jackson, one of the cliff's most energetic proponents, and young tearaways such as Chris Dewhurst and John Moore. Suddenly, just three years after standing alone as a dewey-eyed schoolboy atop Mt Tambo's Bindi summit, Chris was in the thick of the biggest climbing surge Australia had ever seen.

## WALL-TO-WALL HISTORY

Hanging Rock is deserted as Chris leads me up to its dank, shadowy buttresses, each sprouting a vigorous growth of moss and lichen. Climbing is now banned here, a fact that clearly riles my guide. 'Climbers are a bunch of gutless wimps when it comes to dealing with bureaucracy', he declares.

This cliff has long been lambasted for its poor rock and shabby routes. But for Chris what's at stake here is not the climbs but the severing of a historical connection. It was at Hanging Rock that countless Victorian climbers made their first jitters moves on to the vertical. And through the mid-1960s Chris and



*Chris on a trans-Dolomite walk in Italy in September 2003. In the background are the famous Tre Cime di Lavaredo where he had climbed 32 years earlier.*

**Top**, as a 15-year-old at Timbertop Chris kept a journal, replete with maps. This shows the route of his fourth two-day walk.

his new-found cohorts spent many weekends here, zealously tinkering with new climbs and home-made equipment.

Hanging Rock might be fabled for its picnic, but that's nothing compared with the tales that tumble from Chris's lips as we stroll the base of this haunted cliff. Each flaky pinnacle and buttress prompts a story of dogged struggles and monumental plummets. One by one, the ghosts of climbs past are summoned from the memory of a time when partnerships and rivalries were forged, when enthusiasm for the 'next big thing' was as fierce as any drug.

Chris's attachment to the history of places like Hanging Rock and Mt Arapiles is almost palpable. 'We used to spark off each other around the campfire and you listened as keenly as you talked. Coming back from epics on Tiger Wall, you'd listen to people more experienced than yourself—people who'd been to monster cliffs at the Temple and Mt

in Europe and North America beckoned. After six years of intense activity on cliffs in his home state, and a stint of teaching to raise funds, he packed his rucksack and headed overseas.

In the late 1960s the move from rock to snow and ice still loomed as a natural progression for any aspiring climber—even an Australian one. Chris had already tasted mountaineering during an Alpine Guides course at Mt Cook—a sweetener offered by his parents for knuckling down to study during his final year at school. By the time he arrived in Europe in 1971, the push to tackle ever-harder mixed rock and ice routes in the Alps was well under way.

Swept along by the ambition of the times, Chris found himself on unfamiliar ground in the company of audacious partners including fellow Australian John Fantini. It was a case of too much, too soon. Chris still shudders when he thinks of routes like the North

Face of the Drü: 'I was lucky to get off that alive—there were three or four incidents that could have easily resulted in fatalities.' Such dramas revived memories of close calls in New Zealand seven years earlier. 'In the European Alps it was pretty obvious that, at the time, I was out of my depth—it was just too scary, too dangerous', he says.

By contrast, his foray into British rockclimbing was a dream come true. Chris threw himself on to infamous routes at Llanberis in North Wales, worked as an instructor at Plas y Brenin (the National Mountain Centre in Wales) and rubbed shoulders with legends like Joe Brown and Peter Crew. Back in Australia, climbing was barely recognised and the local scene was little more than a couple of remote campfires; in the UK, entire towns were steeped in a rich brew of climbing culture and history. 'To go into a crowded pub in a climbing area and to find no one else but hundreds of climbers shouting about the crux of these famous routes was just intoxicating', recalls Chris.

After two years away, including visits to Yosemite Valley and Canada's Squamish Chief, he returned to Melbourne in December 1972. Disenchanted with the idea of teaching, he tried without success to break into journalism. It was a frustrating time. Climbing continued to be a major force in his life, but many of the activists who gave impetus to

Even before his infatuation with climbing, magazines had been a big part of Chris's early life. 'It was a family joke...the number of magazines and newspapers we subscribed to', he says. 'Whole rooms were given over to storing back issues.' His journalistic ambitions simmered away and in the late 1970s Chris took on the editorship of the Victorian Climbing Club's annual journal in his spare time. This was a catalyst for a bigger idea. Encouraged by his father and friends, he slowly pieced together an editorial philosophy, a creative team and a business that became Wild Publications.

## OVER THE HUMP

Just south of Hanging Rock stands Camels Hump, a small volcanic outcrop rising from the northern flanks of Mt Macedon. It's late afternoon by the time Chris and I amble through the dripping forest to the cliffs. Camels Hump is infamous for winter dustings of snow, but today we are blessed: there are just a few misty squalls and even an occasional burst of sunlight raking through the trees.

On a midwinter's afternoon 40 years ago, John Moore and Chris created The Broomstick, a climb on the arête of the bluff known as the Omega Block. It was the fourth recorded climb on Camels Hump. Today there

now scorned. Rockclimbing always breeds fierce competition; the ethical debates over 'clean climbing' inflamed these rivalries to fever pitch as different factions scrambled to claim the high ground.

Chris was in the midst of the controversies. He had always written avidly and at length about climbing, and such was his passion that he could be scathing about anyone whose commitment or standards seemed questionable. Not surprisingly, this stance was sometimes interpreted as self-promotion. For a time a war of words raged up and down the east coast of the country, with the arch antagonists Chris 'Radio Australia' Baxter and the fiery Queenslander Rick White.

As Chris and I sit beneath the Omega Block on this chilly afternoon, it's hard to believe the heat that climbing generated all those years ago. 'Looking back, there were many times, particularly as a young climber, when I could have been a better person', he reflects. 'I can see why people could be justified for not liking me. I can see that...and I'm to blame for that.'

In the end, the intensity he demanded of climbing, himself and others was unsustainable. While he watched more players drop out of climbing, Chris found new ways to explore and enjoy being on rock, forming lasting partnerships with characters as diverse as Michael Stone, a fellow route-blazer from the 1960s, and the mercurial, Sydney-based enfant terrible Mike Law.

Over time, Chris embraced climbing more as a personal pursuit than a public crusade. After the dust settled, he and Rick White became close confidants—Chris was even best man at Rick's wedding—and the Queenslander was an important early supporter of *Wild*.

When the first issue of the magazine hit the streets in 1981, it not only looked good—thanks to the design flair of Michael Collier—but it clearly came from deep within the activities it represented. By this time Chris had nearly 20 solid years of walking and climbing under his belt. On top of this, he had a strong grasp of business fundamentals and, most importantly of all, the determination to stick to a publishing schedule and make it work. *Wild*'s impact was immediate and its

**➤ SUDDENLY, JUST THREE YEARS AFTER STANDING ALONE AS A DEWY-EYED SCHOOLBOY ATOP MT TAMBO'S BINDI SUMMIT, CHRIS WAS IN THE THICK OF THE BIGGEST CLIMBING SURGE AUSTRALIA HAD EVER SEEN. ➤**

Victorian climbing in the 1960s had moved on: the 'scene' had changed.

For the want of something better to do, he went to work in his father's business, a superannuation consultancy to public companies. His father was a pioneer in the field and received a CBE for his work as a director of federal government organisations. Chris began on a 'temporary basis' and stayed seven years. It was an unlikely career move but it proved a blessing. 'Without realising it, I got a gilded education in running a small business.'

are more than 150 routes, the hardest a grade twenty-nine. The Broomstick was originally climbed mostly on aid, with ten bolts that the pair drilled into the rock, then hung off as they moved upwards. These days it is a grade-23 free climb.

Through the early 1970s, changes in gear and attitudes caused a major shift in the way rockclimbing was thought of. Like some moral rearmament campaign, the 'free climbing revolution' swept cliffs round the world. The use of aid on all but the biggest of walls was

*Near where it all began: a 17-year-old, string-vested Chris on the Crosscut Saw during a Melbourne Walking Club trip in December 1963.*

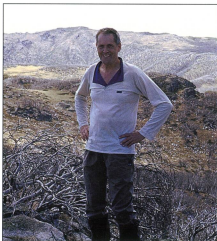


## A WILD CHRONOLOGY

- 1955–60** Family day walks around Bindi Station.
- 1961** Attended Timbertop; intensive bushwalking around the Great Dividing Range.
- 1962–64** Bushwalking with the Melbourne Walking Club.
- 1963** First rockclimb (first ascent of Tower Hill, the Grampians), with John Béchervaise.
- 1964** January: first Tasmanian bushwalk (the Overland Track), with three friends.  
December: Alpine Guides course in the Mt Cook area and mountaineering in the Rangitata area, the Southern Alps, New Zealand.
- 1965** First bushwalk in South-west Tasmania (Lake Pedder and Eastern Arthur Range), including rockclimbing on Federation Peak (first ascent of the North-east Corner), with Reg Williams and others.  
Started regular rockclimbing, mainly at Mt Arapiles and in the Grampians.
- 1966** Bushwalk in South-west Tasmania (Huon River–Eastern Arthur Range–Picton Range), including rockclimbing on Federation Peak (third ascent of the North-west Face), with Reg Williams and others.
- 1967** Rockclimbing on Mt Geryon, Tasmania.  
First rockclimbing guidebook published.
- 1968** Rockclimbing on Frenchmans Cap, Tasmania.  
Published Australia's first rockclimbing calendar.
- 1969** First ascent of Ozymandias, the North Face of the Mt Buffalo Gorge, Victoria.
- 1971–72** Mountaineering in the European Alps and big-wall rockclimbing in Canada.
- 1977** Role in the ABC-TV rockclimbing documentary, *A Taste of Honey*.
- 1978** Role in the ABC-TV dramatised mountaineering documentary, *Just Another Climb*.  
Climbed Mt Hooker in the Southern Alps of New Zealand.  
Founding Editor of *Rock*.
- 1981** Founding Editor of *Wild*.
- 1983** Completed New Zealand's Rees–Dart bushwalking circuit.
- 1987** Trekking in Ladakh, India.  
Bushwalk in New Zealand's Arthurs Pass area.
- 1988** Australian Geographic Spirit of Adventure Award.
- 1989** Walked the South Coast Track in South-west Tasmania.  
Trekking in Turkey, including ascent of Mt Ararat.
- 1991** Walked New Zealand's Kepler Track.
- 1993** Trekking in the Atlas Mountains, Morocco, including ascent of the highest peak in North Africa, Jebel Toubkal.
- 1995–2002** Bushwalking on and near the Di-vide (including Mt Tumbo), East Gippsland, mainly with Brian Walters.
- 1997** Bushwalking in the Nelson Lakes region of New Zealand.
- 1998** Trekking in the Simien Mountains, Ethiopia, including ascent of the highest peak in Ethiopia, Ras Dashen.
- 1999** Twelfth rockclimbing guidebook published.
- 2002** Bushwalking in the Western Arthur Range, South-west Tasmania.  
Equipment for Bushwalking booklet published.  
Awarded the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) for 'service to environmental journalism, through the promotion of wilderness activities and protection of the environment'.
- 2004** Bushwalk, South-west Cape, South-west Tasmania.  
Compiled searchable online index for *Wild*.  
Retired from *Wild* and *Rock* due to ill health.

growing success kept Chris involved in all aspects of the outdoors.

Years of disappearing to cliffs every weekend had played havoc with his social life but, thanks to the intervention of mutual friends, he met his future wife Sue at a dinner gathering in the early 1980s. A teacher by training, Sue shared Chris's close affinity with the mountains after spending her childhood on a family farm at the foot of the New Zealand Alps. There's even the romantic possibility that Sue might have first spied Chris from her parents' garden as he rattled past aboard the bus from Mt Cook to the Rangitata, way back in 1964.



*Happy to be out bush again: Chris on Mt Niggerhead, the Bogong High Plains, during his first bushwalk after more than two years of serious illness.*

Having survived a courtship that involved the rigours of climbing, walking and the usual Baxter quota of bush epics, Sue and Chris built a strong bond. Together they have not only shared many walking experiences in Australia and New Zealand, but through the 1990s they ventured on treks to exotic mountain destinations in Ladakh, Turkey, Morocco and Ethiopia—many of which Chris has written about in *Wild*. Closer to home, they created a rural retreat in the Grampians, a place for regular weekends away from Melbourne.

Energetic, resourceful and instinctively caring, Sue is a natural foil for Chris. 'She really is my soul mate', he says, 'and not having children of our own makes us even closer.' A committed Christian, she helped 'reignite' his faith. 'It's hugely important to me. Like all Christians, I know I'm far from perfect but it's the driving force in almost everything I do and say.'

Knowing they could not have children, in 1990 he and Sue took on a foster child, a five-year-old girl, Marie. What was meant to be a temporary placement ended up lasting three years. Dealing with a boisterous newcomer from a troubled background was a challenging, life-changing experience.

'We all became extremely close as a family,' says Chris. 'It was a lot of work, a lot of stresses

and a lot of fun. It softened and humanised me a lot. I realise it was the most worthwhile thing I've ever done and I can't imagine any father loving his daughter more than I loved Marie.' The eventual decision to relocate her with a family where she could be with other children was the toughest decision Sue and Chris had ever faced. Her leaving was an acutely painful time—Chris had never known grief like it.

They continued to foster other children on a respite basis and formed a special bond with another girl, Alyse, over several years. Alyse and Marie recently met for the first time to help celebrate Chris's 60th birthday. 'These girls were a wonderful, God-given opportunity, so enriching. It showed me just how important relationships are—you only get one chance at them.'

During the past seven years Chris has faced very different challenges, which have highlighted the preciousness of life. In 2000 he was diagnosed with a brain tumour requiring major surgery. He survived this ordeal, only to fall seriously ill in mid-2004. He was diagnosed with an aggressive form of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, then developed pneumocystis pneumonia. Near death, he received the news that close friend and fellow cancer-sufferer Rick White had died, aged 58. Chris was still in hospital when Rick's memorial service was held. That two such powerful climbing legends should both confront cancer at a relatively young age is a sobering coincidence.

Despite extensive treatment, Chris's own future remains uncertain. His illness has not fully responded to conventional therapy but he is pursuing all options, including healing and meditation classes, and he acknowledges tremendous support from family and friends. 'It's been an amazing journey. I would never have had the guts to wish it on myself but I still say that if I died tomorrow the net effect on my life is still a positive one. Whatever happens, looking back on my life, I count myself as very blessed in every respect.'

Some climbers make quite a show of putting their necks on the line and staring death in the face. Not Chris Baxter. Daredevil stunts have never been his style. He is that paradox of a cautious man who braves dangerous places. He wore a helmet climbing when few others did, and he has never been averse to a tight rope or an extra piece of protection.

For Chris, what counts is not the daring but the doing, the freedom to explore and the rewards of being there for the long haul. It's an approach that has sustained a rich outdoors life and now fortifies his confrontation with illness. The Grampians continue to lure him back on to rock. He recently started climbing again with John Moore and has done multiday walks with Brian Walters. The bush may not be a cure but it serves as life-giving medicine. As Sue says: 'Chris is such a determined person—he's just not going to give up.'

After 30 years of walking and climbing, Quentin Chester is still tapping into the call of the wild. He has written widely about his travels and tribulations, including books on Kakadu and the Kimberley, as well as many stories about his fervour for the Flanders Ranges. qchester@snet.net.au



Hilaree Nelson O'Neill digs in as she's caught in unexpected  
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# Douglas–Apsley National Park's

*Peter Franklin* takes us on a three-day walk through a lesser-known national park on Tasmania

ONE OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PERIOD WHEN THE GREENS HELD the balance of power in Tasmania was the 1989 declaration of the Douglas–Apsley National Park. Conservationists, including the Wilderness Society, had for several years been advocating that the area be protected. Mining companies had pushed exploratory roads through the region and the logging industry was looking on with interest. Earlier, coal mining took place, as well as some grazing in the open valleys, and fur trappers were common in the years between the two World Wars. Previously, Aborigines had roamed the area and would no doubt have been pleased with the plentiful wildlife and a climate that is milder than in most other parts of Tasmania.

Douglas–Apsley National Park is only a few kilometres from the coast and has two main river valleys cutting through an uncleared eucalypt forest plateau. It shouldn't come as a surprise to learn that the rivers are the Douglas and the Apsley. In addition, there is the Denison Rivulet, not to be confused with the well-known Denison River of western Tasmania.

Much of the bushwalking in the state is quite spectacular and the Douglas–Apsley suffers a little in comparison. However, it still easily equals many of the well-known mainland Australian destinations, which demonstrates how fortunate Tasmania is. Apart from unspoilt bushland vistas and gorges, the park features waterfalls, varied

flora, bountiful bird life and the spectacular rocky towers known as Nichols Needles.

## When to go

The lovely climate is due to the park being on Tasmania's east coast, where the mountains to the west provide protection. Spring and autumn are a delight here and even winter days are usually nice, although the nights are long. I avoid these parts in the summer, as it is dry and water can be scarce.

## Safety/warnings

The through walk requires a car shuttle so ample time is needed to arrange this. The Leeaberra Track is mostly distinct, but is rocky and a bit rough underfoot. If the water level near Heritage Falls is high, crossing the Douglas River the next day (and the Apsley after that) could be difficult.

The walk must be done from north to south as the fungal disease *Phytophthora cinnamoni*, an insidious killer of plants, is present in the southern part of the park. Contained in the soil, it attacks plant roots and can be carried on bushwalking gear including walker's boots and



# Leeaberra Track

## east coast

tent pegs. If on a day walk in the southern section, it is advisable not to go further north than where the Douglas River is first met.

### Maps

The *Douglas-Apsley National Park* map 1:50 000 is sufficient for the walk. Tasmap 1:25 000 sheets are available, but several are needed to cover the whole track.

### Permits

National Park fees are payable.

### Access

The park is just north of Bicheno on the Tasman Highway (A3) from Hobart. The southern entrance road to the park leaves the A3 three kilometres north of Bicheno on Rosedale Road. Drive for seven-and-a-half kilometres to the park entrance. The northern entrance is 19 kilometres further along the Tasman High-

way. Follow a fairly obscure side road with minimal signage, the E4, for four-and-a-half kilometres to a junction. Take the left fork and continue for just under two kilometres to the park entrance. At times it is rough but conventional vehicles are adequate if you drive with caution.

Bicheno can also be reached from Launceston via the Midland Highway, then the Lake Leake Road from Campbell Town.

## THE WALK at a glance

<b>Grade</b>	Moderate
<b>Length</b>	Three days
<b>Distance</b>	23 kilometres
<b>Type</b>	Rocky terrain through dry forest with some steep hills interspersed with river valleys
<b>Region</b>	Eastern coastal Tasmania
<b>Nearest town</b>	Bicheno
<b>Start, finish</b>	E4 road 24 kilometres north of Bicheno, Rosedale Road
<b>Map</b>	<i>Douglas-Apsley National Park</i> 1:50 000 Land Information Service
<b>Best time</b>	Spring and autumn
<b>Special points</b>	Car shuttle required; fuel-stove-only area from October to April; walk must be done from north to south to stop spread of phytophthora fungal disease

### Water

Water is available at Douglas River near Heritage Falls and again near Tevelein Falls. The only other reliable water can be found at the Denison Rivulet (crossed three times) and at the Apsley River.

### Camping

You can camp at Heritage Falls, lower on the Douglas River below Tevelein Falls, and at the Apsley River. There is a small campsite just south of the final crossing of the Denison Rivulet. The only toilets are at Apsley Waterhole.

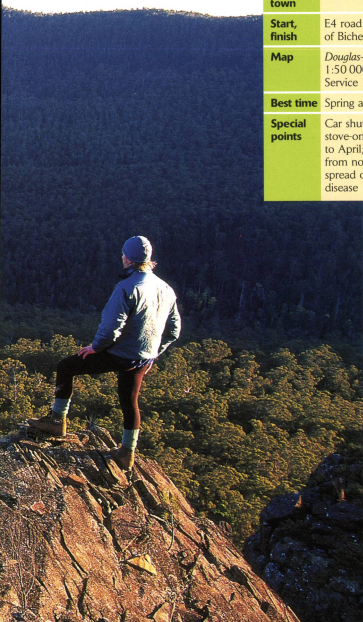
### The walk

There are several walks in the Douglas-Apsley, mostly day or half-day, but the walk described is a three-day through-walk on the Leeaberra Track, beginning at Thompsons Marshes at the northern end and ending at Apsley Waterhole near the southern boundary.

The car park at the start of the walk is close to the top of a hill, making the initial part of the walk fairly level. Follow an old vehicle track, which is fast becoming a walking track, beside Thompsons Marshes for almost two kilometres, to where a narrower walking track begins. The Marshes are close to the headwaters of the river and quite heavily cloaked in melaleuca, tea tree and other shrubs, but beyond this area you enter drier eucalypt woodland with hibbertia and black-eyed susans (*Tetretheca*) providing splashes of colour during late winter and spring. A short and gentle climb leads to a junction; take the right-hand track that leads to the campsite beside the Douglas River, near Heritage Falls. The left track, marked Rainforest Ledge, is an alternative, somewhat longer and more arduous route to the campsite. (A two-day walk using the Rainforest Ledge route is an option for returning as a circuit.) From this junction it is mostly a gentle, downhill walk through forest to meet the Douglas River. Although the first day is not long, about one-two hours, it is handy because apart from the travel time, there is also the time-consuming task of leaving a car at the Apsley River.

From the campsite, the track leads down river to Heritage Falls, following the river in parts; the water level dictates how freely you can wander about. Just before reaching the top of Heritage Falls there is a rough scree ascent, then a descent beside a cliff to the bottom

*Taking in the evening view from Nichols Cap across the darkened Douglas River valley, the dolerite spires of Nichols Needles below. Grant Dixon*





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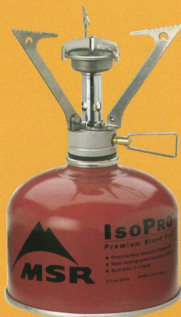
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of the falls, which also allows access to Leeaberra Falls. However, the descent section is chute-like and quite dangerous. It is important to take care, making sure that no others are found to follow as loose rocks can be dislodged and bounce dangerously.

## Douglas-Apsley National Park history

The area encompassing the Douglas-Apsley National Park is quite hilly and rugged and it seems that these factors discouraged Aboriginal people from using it to any great extent, although parts may have been used as a way from the coast to the Tasmanian midlands.

In the 1840s the discovery of coal brought white settlers into the region and their legacy is a number of exploration tracks. Cattle were also grazed in a few regions and a considerable number of trappers made a living from the fur trade. Although small-scale logging had occurred previously, in the 1980s the logging industry took more interest in the area. At this stage the park was State Forest and parts of what is now the northern end of the park were felled for saw logs and pulp. The growing pressure from conservationists to save the land was resisted by the Tasmanian Government.

A university study in 1977 had revealed that the region was of significant wilderness value as it included much of the last large untouched area of dry sclerophyll forest and was rich in biodiversity. The Wilderness Society proposed a national park and by 1984 had enlisted other groups, including the Australian Conservation Foundation, to help prepare a strong case. Publicity was generated and to encourage the public to visit, walking tracks were constructed and maps with track notes produced—this allowed bushwalkers easier access and helped to build support for the national park proposal. The increasingly unpopular and divisive State Government was replaced and the Greens gained the balance of power. They agreed to support the Labor Party, with one of the conditions being the preservation of the Douglas-Apsley. In December 1989 the area was formally declared a national park.

## Day two

The Leeaberra Track leads south-east from the campsite at 90° to the river and climbs steadily to a rocky, eucalypt-clad ridgetop and a junction, approximately one hour's walk. Colourful wattles and views to the coast can be seen from here. Take the right-hand track to continue to the Apsley. Although distinct, the track is rocky and rough underfoot. After about five minutes another junction is reached, signalling a short side route to Lookout Hill. It is well worth going to the lookout, as for much of this day's walk the forest precludes extensive views—this is one of the few places where a panorama of the river valley, with rugged, steep and heavily forested hills and the distinct shape of Nichols Needles, can be glimpsed. It only takes about ten minutes to reach the lookout, partly through a glen of small ferns—a bit different from the rest of the walk.

Returning to the main track, the route descends gently and after about 25 minutes the

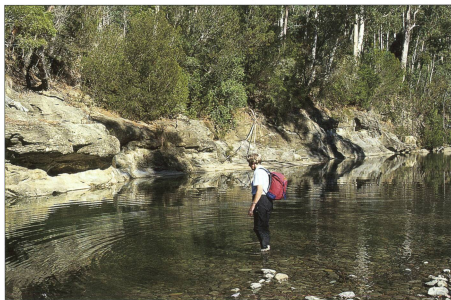
junction to Nichols Cap is reached. This is a longer side trip, but there would be few people who don't venture out to view the imposing Nichols Needles from the Cap, and there are two needles quite close by. They are, however, best left to rockclimbers for closer inspection. Around these rocky tops the fine-leaved *Eucalyptus nicholii* dominates.

Back at the junction, the track descends again and soon reaches a junction with an old vehicle track. Turn right and continue downhill and it eventually becomes a narrow walking track again. As the river gets closer, you'll notice casuarinas. A steady, downhill walk of about

for a short distance before a gradual climb over rock-strewn country to a saddle on Mt Andrew. From here it is a gradual, downhill walk to reach the Apsley River, which has to be crossed to get to the car park. There is a camping area just before the car park.

Several other walks are possible on the Apsley; details are provided on information signs near the car park. 📶

In his late teens *Peter Franklin* was inspired by photographs of the Tasmanian wilderness; it was the spark of a lifelong interest. He has bushwalked extensively in the island state and is particularly fond of the untracked alpine areas.

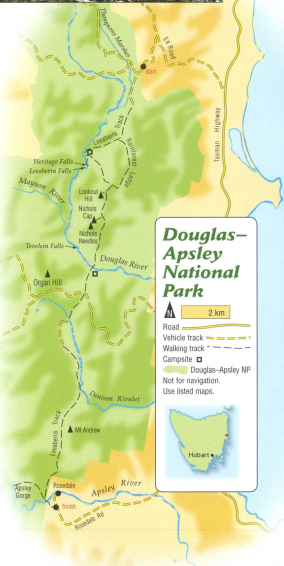


*Sue Franklin wading the beautiful lower Douglas River. Peter Franklin*

an hour takes you to the Douglas River. The campsite is on the south bank with room for several tents. Rocks usually provide an easy river crossing unless the river level is high. There are many birds, with the melodious sounds of the golden whistler and grey shrike-thrush echoing through the valley.

## Day three

The final day begins with a continuously steep climb out of the river valley. Follow a bush track up a ridge through eucalypt forest, passing a section of grass trees which look great when struck by sunlight. When the track finally levels out (after about an hour) there's a junction with an emergency four-wheel-drive track. Take the right-hand track to a second junction and take the left-hand track, which is an old minerals exploration track that is partly rehabilitating. It crosses the headwaters of Denison Rivulet as it winds around the foot of the hills. This track continues for almost three kilometres before becoming a narrow bush track, which crosses parts of the Denison Marshes but is mostly in pleasant woodland. About six kilometres from the campsite, Denison Rivulet is met again and this is the last chance of finding drinkable water until the end of the walk. Cross the rivulet twice. A swampy area follows





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# The upside of down

A survey of down sleeping bags, by John Chapman

THE AVERAGE BUSHWALKER MIGHT ASSUME that sleeping bags have changed little since *Wild* began: after all, standard models still look much the same on the surface. But a closer inspection reveals marked improvements over the last 27 years. The major changes have been a steady improvement in down quality and the development of lighter shell materials. At a rough estimate, this has reduced sleeping bag weight and packed volume by around 20–30 per cent. A glance through

the survey table will reveal many very light bags with surprisingly good loft values.

This survey looks at a selection of down sleeping bags suggested for general bushwalking in Australia, covering all price ranges. A maximum of three models from each manufacturer has been selected although there are many more models available in some brands.

Choosing a suitable sleeping bag can be a daunting task, particularly for the inexperienced. Body size, metabolism, preferred sleep-

ing position, desired weight, budget and intended use should all be taken into account. The hardest of these is intended use as most of us don't know what kind of walking we will end up doing over the life of a sleeping bag. Most experienced walkers will choose a three-season or warmer bag for serious bushwalking: this is a good starting point if you are unsure. While down sleeping bags may seem expensive, they are very cheap if you consider the cost per night; they are also good value as they last a long time if treated well. My main bushwalking bag is 22 years old and, while now looking a bit ratty, it has served me well.

## Wild Gear Surveys: what they are and what they're not

The purpose of *Wild* Gear Surveys is to assist readers in purchasing specialist outdoors equipment of the quality and with the features most appropriate for their needs; and to save them time and money in the process.

The cost of 'objective' and meaningful testing is beyond the means not only of *Wild*, but of the Australian outdoors industry in general and we are not aware of such testing being regularly carried out by an outdoors magazine anywhere in the world. Similarly, given the number of products involved, field testing is beyond the means of Australia's outdoors industry. *Wild* Gear Surveys summarise information, collate and present it in a convenient and readily comparable form, with guidelines and advice to assist in the process of wise equipment selection.

Surveys are selected for their knowledge of the subject and their impartiality. Surveys are checked and verified by an independent referee, and reviewed by *Wild*'s editorial staff. Surveys are based on the items' availability and specifications at the time of the relevant issue's production; ranges and specifications may change later. Before publication each manufacturer/distributor is sent a summary of the surveyor's findings regarding the specifications of their products for verification.

Some aspects of surveys, such as the assessment of value and features—and especially the inclusion/exclusion of certain products—entail a degree of subjective judgement on the part of the surveyor, the referee and *Wild*, space being a key consideration.

'Value' is based primarily upon price relative to features and quality. A product with more elaborate or specialised features may be rated more highly by someone whose main concern is not price.

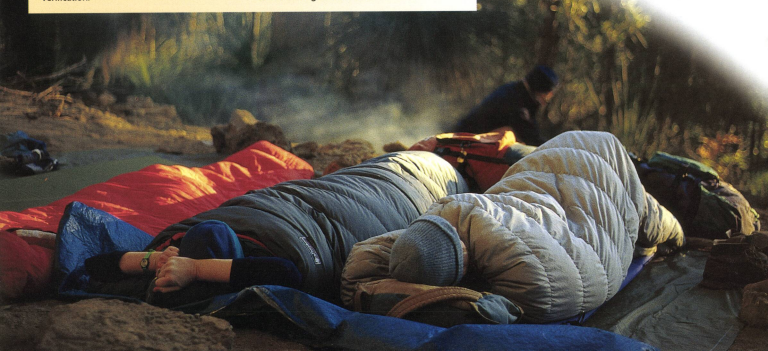
An important criterion for inclusion is 'wide availability'. To qualify, a product must usually be stocked by a number of specialist outdoors shops in the central business districts of the major Australian cities. With the recent proliferation of brands and models, and the constant ebb and flow of their availability, 'wide availability' is becoming an increasingly difficult concept to pin down.

Despite these efforts to achieve accuracy, impartiality, comprehensiveness and usefulness, no survey is perfect. Apart from the obvious human elements that may affect assessment, the quality, materials and specifications of any product may vary markedly from batch to batch and even from sample to sample. It is ultimately the responsibility of readers to determine what is best for their particular circumstances and for the use they have in mind for gear reviewed.

## Seasons

The suppliers provided these ratings to indicate the conditions for which a sleeping bag was designed. This is really only a very rough guide as each person's metabolism is different. A '2+' rating suggests that the bag would ideally be used in warmer climates such as are found in the northern half of Australia, or in the southern half of Australia in summer and fine spring and autumn weather. A three-season bag should keep an average person warm in a tent in spring, summer and autumn in the southern half of Australia. A '3+' rating suggests a slightly warmer bag, suitable for use below the snowline in winter, while a bag with a four-season rating should be suitable

*A cosy place to bed down (Banksia Cave, the Budawangs, New South Wales). Simon Knight*





## Down sleeping bags

	Seasons	Shape	Fill weight, grams	Total weight, grams	Loft height, centimetres	Loft	Outer	Zip	Size	Design	Construction	Value	Comments	Approx price, \$
<b>Exped China</b> <a href="http://www.exped.com">www.exped.com</a>														
Hummingbird	2	M	290	710	10	750	Nylon	1 T	S	●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●1/2		400
Ibis	3	M	450	920	13	750	Nylon	1 T	S	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●		470
Woodpecker	3	M	630	1100	17	750	Nylon	1 T	S	●●●1/2	●●●	●●●		550
<b>Kathmandu China</b> <a href="http://www.kathmandu.com.au">www.kathmandu.com.au</a>														
Cicerone	3	T	600	1230	14	600	Nylon	2 T	S, W, XL	●●●	●●●	●●		500
Navigator V4	3	T	700	1550	15	600	Nylon	2 T	S, W, XL	●●●1/2	●●●	●●		530
Moonraker Epic	4	M	700	1380	18	700	Epic	1 T	S, XL	●●●	●●●	●●1/2		770
<b>Macpac China</b> <a href="http://www.macpac.co.nz">www.macpac.co.nz</a>														
Escapade 700	3+	T	700	1200	18	600	Nylon	2 T	S	●●●	●●●1/2	●●●		330
Latitude 500 Loftpro	3	T	500	1120	13	650	Reflex Loftpro	2 T	S, XL	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●		730
Sanctuary 700 XP	4	M	700	1280	19	750	As above	2 T	S, W, XL	●●●1/2	●●●	●●1/2		780
<b>Marmot China/USA</b> <a href="http://www.marmot.com">www.marmot.com</a> †														
Hydrogen	3	M	285	595	15	850	Nylon	1/2 T	S	●●1/2	●●●	●●		600
<b>Mont China</b> <a href="http://www.mont.com.au">www.mont.com.au</a>														
Zodiac 500	3	T	500	1100	14	600	Nylon	2 T	S, W	●●●	●●●	●●1/2		320
Brindabella	4	T	700	1400	19	700	Nylon	2 T	S, W, XL	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●1/2	Includes Hydronaute XT foot; full Hydronaute XT model also available; women's model called Aurora	590
Spindrift XT	4	M	750	1420	21	700	Hydronaute XT	1 T	S, W, XL	●●●	●●●	●●●	Radiant barrier; women's model called Zeal	730
<b>Mountain Designs China</b> <a href="http://www.mountaindesigns.com">www.mountaindesigns.com</a>														
Travelite 500	3	T	500	1070	16	600	Nylon	2 T	S, W	●●●	●●●	●●1/2		330
Pod 700	4	M	700	1350	16	600	Nylon	2 T	S, W	●●●1/2	●●●	●●●		400
Ultra 500	4	M	500	950	17	700	Nylon	1/2 T	S	●●●	●●●1/2	●●●		470
<b>Mountain Equipment China</b> <a href="http://www.mountain-equipment.co.uk">www.mountain-equipment.co.uk</a> †														
Helium 250	2	M	250	650	10	600	Nylon	3/4 T	S, XL	●●1/2	●●●	●●1/2		350
Helium 400	3	M	400	850	12	600	Nylon	3/4 T	S, XL	●●●	●●1/2	●●1/2		420
<b>Mountain Hardwear China</b> <a href="http://www.mountainhardwear.com">www.mountainhardwear.com</a>														
Plute 20	4	M	650	1190	18	600	Nylon	1 T	S, W, XL	●●1/2	●●●	●●●		400
Phantom 32	3	M	290	600	13	800	Nylon	3/4 T	S, W, XL	●●	●●●	●●1/2		450
Spectre SL †	4	M	470	1250	17	800	Conduit SL	1 T	S, XL	●●●	●●●	●●1/2	Welded seams	700
<b>One Planet China/Australia</b> <a href="http://www.oneplanet.com.au">www.oneplanet.com.au</a>														
Robin Hoodless 450	2+	R	450	1210	11	600	Nylon	2 T	S	●●●	●●●1/2	●●●		280
Bush Lite	3+	T	700	1500	17	700	Nylon	2 T	S, W, XL	●●●	●●●1/2	●●●	Also available in Epic	480
Cocoon 500	3+	M	500	830	15	800	Nylon	1/2 S	S	●●●	●●●	●●●		530
<b>Roman China</b> <a href="http://www.roman.com.au">www.roman.com.au</a> †														
Flight Advance 500	3	T	500	1400	13	575	Nylon	2 S	S, XL, XLW	●●●	●●●	●●●		260
Everest 500	3	T	500	1400	13	650	Nylon	2 S	S	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●●		300
<b>Snowgum China</b> <a href="http://www.snowgum.com.au">www.snowgum.com.au</a>														
Coulou	3	T	550	1350	13	600	Nylon	2 T	S	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●●1/2		270
Spindrift	3	T	700	1570	15	600	Nylon	2 T	S	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●●		300
<b>Western Mountaineering USA</b> <a href="http://www.westernmountaineering.com">www.westernmountaineering.com</a>														
Ultralite Super	4	M	395	735	14	850	Nylon	1 T	S, W, XL	●●●1/2	●●●	●●●		750
Apache Super DL	4	M	535	1075	18	850	Gore DryLoft	1 T	S, W, XL	●●●	●●●	●●●		1050

● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent **Shape:** Mummy, Rectangular, Tapered rectangular **Loft:** the number of cubic inches that one ounce of down will fill in a standard test **Outer:** Conduit SL, Epic, Gore DryLoft, Hydronaute XT and Reflex Loftpro are all highly water-resistant, breathable materials **Zips:** 1/2 length zip, 3/4 length zip, 1 zip, 2 zips, Single zip slide, Twin zip slides on longest zip **Size:** Standard, Women's version, XL extra long, XLW extra wide and long **Marmot:** shells sewn in China, filled and finished in USA **One Planet:** shells sewn in China, filled and finished in Australia **†** not seen by referee **The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made**

for weekend use in snow conditions. Sleeping bags for extended snow trips are beyond the scope of this survey.

Some manufacturers supply temperature ratings in degrees. While this may seem useful for comparisons, unfortunately the ratings are generally not consistent. Most do not use a standard method; comfort levels in the sleeping bag at the temperature given can

vary from being cosy and comfortable to being barely warm. However, the European Temperature Rating Standard EN13537 is an independent, objective rating that gives consistent results while defining a range of comfort levels (see down sleeping bag survey in *Wild* no 99). Some manufacturers have adopted this; it is to be hoped that it will become more widely used.

## Shape

Rectangular sleeping bags are primarily intended for travel and, at most, occasional bush-walking use. They fold out to make good doonas but don't perform as well for bush-walking as they have too much dead space—volume not filled by the person inside—around the legs and feet. The most efficient

shape for bushwalking is one that mimics the shape of the body; wide around the chest and hips and much narrower around the knees and feet. Tapered rectangular bags go part of the way towards this ideal: they gradually reduce in width from the chest down to the feet, with the foot end lying flat. This shape is popular with many bushwalkers as there is less dead space than in a rectangular bag but still enough room to move around. If you sleep cold, then you should consider mummy-shaped bags. These are sometimes referred to as tulip-shaped and are characterised by a rounded foot-box. The mummy is undoubtedly the warmest style of bag for its weight but some find the narrow shape restrictive.

## Buy right

- People come in different shapes and sleeping bags also vary. It is important to test whether a sleeping bag fits correctly by getting inside: if it is too wide, there will be dead space; too tight, and cold spots will be created. Check that the hood covers your head and the zip is easy to use from the inside.
- Some people find mummy bags claustrophobic: if considering one, try it out before you buy. Some clubs, shops and community groups hire gear and this can help you discover the best shape for you.
- If you want a bag to use in all seasons, then consider models with long zips. Bags with zips across the feet are the most versatile in warmer conditions but will be heavier.
- Buy a sleeping-bag liner (silk, down-filled or fleece): this will keep the bag cleaner, reducing washing frequency and extending its life.
- Check the stuff sack supplied: if it's not appropriate, then add the cost of an extra stuff sack on to the price.

*The Mountain Designs Travelite 500 is a tapered-rectangular bag.*

up to 1800 grams in total weight, the heaviest bag in this survey weighs 1570 grams, and a significant number weigh less than 1200 grams. Fill weights and total weights were both provided by the suppliers.

## Loft height

This figure was obtained by measuring the thickness at chest level (usually three baffles down from the neck of the bag so as to be

one ounce will fill under a standard test. The higher the number, the more air the down will capture and hence the warmer it will be for the same weight. Cheaper bags tend to contain down with a filling power of 600 cubic inches per ounce, while the higher-quality, more expensive downs with ratings of 800 or more appear in the top-end bags. Some suppliers still quote a quality *range*; in all such cases the table gives the lower value as that is the minimum guaranteed.

*The Mountain Equipment Helium 250 (top) and Western Mountaineering Apache Super DL (bottom) are both mummy-shaped bags.*

below the neck baffle) of the bag when laid on a flat floor. Sleeping bags expand when released from their stuff sacks, but it can take some time for them to loft to full thickness. Apart from the Snowgum Couloir, all bags measured had been on display and were fully lofted. For the Couloir, lofting was hand-assisted to provide a fair measurement.

## Loft and fill type

Down is harvested from birds—ducks and geese in the case of sleeping bags. However, birds have feathers (which have quills) as well as down (which does not), and it is inevitable that there will be some feathers in any sample of down. With many different species of ducks and geese, and down quality affected by the time of year and location of the harvest, claims such as '100 per cent goose down' and down-to-feather ratios such as 90/10 are meaningless when comparing down types. With the odd exception, such claims are now rare. In 2005, the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission investigated such claims and found many to be misleading, later releasing guidelines to clarify the labelling of down content.

The major sleeping bag suppliers in Australia have now agreed to use meaningful values to describe down. Most of them have adopted the same standard for describing a down's filling power: that is, the volume that

## Outer

While comparing down between manufacturers has become easier, shell materials are still very confusing as there is a wide range of trade names in use. In general, if the shell is made of a down-proof nylon material, then the outer fabric is listed in the table as nylon. If the shell material has some special properties that result in it being more water-resistant, waterproof or windproof, then the trade name is given. In particular, waterproof materials are less breathable than normal nylons; thus they trap more air and are usually warmer as a result. However, many of them are laminated materials and can be heavier than nylon, and in some conditions condensation will gather on the inside. They are also more expensive. Nylon performs very well for general bushwalking: more expensive materials should really only be considered if you have a particular need for their special properties.

## Sizes

Most standard sleeping bags are made to fit the 'average' person—usually male and around 175–180 centimetres in height. A number of models are made to fit women; they are shorter and more tulip-shaped, and often contain the same weight of down as the standard bags. As a result they are slightly warmer than a standard bag at the same price. Extra long (XL) bags have around ten per cent more down added to keep them as warm as the standard model, resulting in a corresponding price increase. As a rule, only the most popular models are available in several sizes.

## Design

This is a subjective assessment of how well the combined features of the bag would work



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- COCOON

Fill Weights: 300, 400, 500 grams  
Total Weights: 630, 730, 830 grams

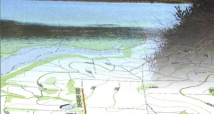
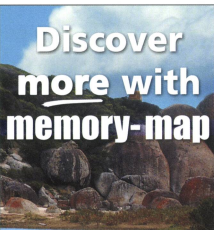
- STOWAWAY

Fill Weights: 150, 250, 350 grams  
Total Weights: 420, 520, 620 grams



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## Baffle design

Baffles are a hidden but very important feature of all sleeping bags in this survey. These thin walls of material constrain the down into a series of tubes and also allow the inner and outer shells to be separated: the baffle material does not have to be down-proof but there are some advantages if it is. The main purpose of baffles is to hold the down in place so that it can trap still air, a sleeping bag's primary insulator.

The simplest designs consist of baffles sewn into the same location on the inner and outer shells—this is usually found on the cheapest models. Most models, however, have slanting baffle walls, creating parallelogram-shaped tubes with narrow, triangular spaces in some corners; these trap more air than rectangular tubes. Slanting walls also allow the tubes to increase in thickness, an important feature in those bags in which the down can be shifted from top to base. This ability is common in tapered rectangular bags, and allows the warmth of the bag to be altered. In this type of bag, gravity will shift much of the down into the base over time; make sure you shake the down back into the top if you are expecting a cold night. There are several other ways of making baffles trap even more air. In practice, more complicated baffles often provide only minor advantages as the additional material they require adds weight and negates some of the gain from using less down. The most obvious such variation is the vertical (head to toe) alignment of baffles in the chest section of some models, which reduces the sideways movement of down.

It is common for a bag's top and base to be filled with different amounts of down: a 60 per cent upper, 40 per cent lower split is

generally adopted. A significant feature of many designs is the presence of side-block baffles to prevent down shifting from the top to the base. A bag with side-block baffles will remain consistently warmer than one without, but is less versatile as it is harder to vary the warmth by simply shaking the bag. However, side-block baffles may not prevent long-term shift of down from the chest towards your feet. This problem shows up in old down bags with almost empty baffles near the chin and plump baffles around the feet. There can be several reasons for this movement: if the baffle material lets down through easily, then the down can simply work its way through the baffle material. A limitation of side-block baffles is that it is not easy to sew together a series of three-dimensional tubes without major gaps while hiding most of the stitching on the inside—certainly not a trivial task! To minimise costs, some manufacturers leave significant gaps at the ends of the baffles, most commonly near the zipper, to allow them to extract the sewing machine foot. While down normally moves only slowly through these holes, dramatic movements can happen when it clumps together, such as when a sleeping bag is washed.

Internal construction methods usually cannot be assessed or seen by buyers. Sometimes the only guide is that bags with similar materials are significantly different in price. Online research and shop staff may be able to help.



*Macpac's Latitude 500 Loftpro.*

## Construction

This is another subjective assessment based on how the features and materials were combined to produce the finished product. This rating does not consider price. The surveyor considered the quality and cut of the stitching (excluding internal stitching as this could not be examined), baffle construction and baffle gaps, how well the zippers moved or how often they snagged, how easy it was to lock the zipper at the top (usually with a Velcro tab), how easily the down could be moved inside its baffle, the outer and inner fabrics, drawcords and locks, and packed size.

## Value

The third subjective rating weighs up design and construction against price. ●●

## Other brands available

Brand	Distributor	Contact
Black Wolf	Phoenix Leisure Group	(02) 9667 0899
GoLite	Phoenix Leisure Group	
Outdoor Expedition	Rays Outdoors	(03) 5278 7633

Bushwalking writer John Chapman has been contributing to *Wild* since the first issue. His favourite place is Tasmania although he regularly visits all other Australian states.

This survey was refereed by Matt Dabziel.

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- Liveable: Both vestibules provide dry entry, gear storage and covered food-prep areas.
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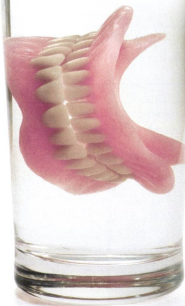
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# A HELPING HAND

Zac Zaharias surveys trekking poles

**Wild Gear Surveys: what they are and what they're not**

(See box on page 57)

**AS AN AVID CROSS-COUNTRY SKI RACER** I quickly learned the value of poles in a race: the upper body provides around 50 per cent of a racer's propulsion. When I took to Himalayan climbing and trekking it was a natural progression for me to use poles as an adjunct to my ice axe. Poles made long, gentle snow slopes easier to negotiate and served as useful probes for crevasses. In the oxygen-starved environment at altitude, poles stopped you from slumping, making it easier to breathe.

Over recent years, trekking poles have become increasingly popular as we follow European and US trends. Poles are one of the best ways to extend your walking capacity, particularly in rugged terrain. On a 21-day family trek in Nepal some years ago we watched a German family flash past. The couple's six-year-old son, who was about the same height as my pole, had his own miniature versions. After two months of using the poles this lad was as proficient as the world's best.

Trekking poles fulfil three main functions: power, support and balance. The greatest benefit gained from using trekking poles is the support they provide when descending while carrying a large pack. Placing them in front of your body and lowering weight on to your arms and poles takes weight off your ankles, knees and hips, thereby reducing wear and tear on those joints. This is particularly beneficial if you are trying to protect joints and limbs with pre-existing problems.

When poles are used for power and balance, the upper body provides push from the poles, allowing increased walking speed. Nordic walking is a new pursuit that uses poles as a natural extension of the arms to increase propulsion and speed, and provide an all-body workout.

Trekking poles come with a range of features. Since the previous survey in *Wild* no 93, there have been significant changes in trekking pole materials, shape and design that translate into greater capability and wider choice.

*It's times like these that you're really grateful for your poles! Glen Turvey carries a large load after an expedition traversing the Southern Patagonian Ice Cap. Grant Dixon*



## Trekking poles

	Weight, grams	Minimum-maximum length, centimetres	No. of segments	Antishock	Angled handgrip	Shaft material	Pole tips	Durability	Value	Comments	Approx. price, £
<b>Black Diamond</b> China <a href="http://www.bdel.com">www.bdel.com</a>											
Switchback	290	62.5-140	3	N	N	CA	TC	●●●	●●●●	Binary and FlickLock adjustments; rubber handgrip; large baskets available as optional extra	120/pair
Enduro CF †	250	63.5-140	3	N	N	C, CA	TC	●●●1/2	●●●●	Double FlickLock adjustments; foam handgrip on shaft; padded wrist strap; handgrip knobs, large baskets and compact handgrips for smaller hands available as optional extras	200/pair
Spire †	285	68.5-140	3	N	Y	CA	TC	●●●●	●●●●	Elliptic-shaped shaft for stiffness; binary and FlickLock adjustments; 15° angled handgrip; foam handgrip on padded wrist strap; handgrip knob; 125 centimetre pole with smaller handle available for people shorter than 172 centimetres; large baskets available as optional extra	220/pair
<b>Fizan</b> Italy <a href="http://www.fizan.it">www.fizan.it</a> †											
Trek Tour	250	61-140	3	N	N	Al	TC	●●1/2	●●	Rubber handgrip; nylon wrist strap with buckle, large baskets available as optional extras	60
Alpin AS	260	69-140	3	Y	N	Al	TC	●●1/2	●●1/2	Rubber handgrip; padded, adjustable wrist strap; rubber tip and large baskets available as optional extras	80
Altaquota AS	265	69-140	3	Y	N	Al	TC	●●●	●●●	Rubber handgrip; padded, adjustable wrist strap with buckle; rubber tip and large baskets available as optional extras	110
<b>Gabel</b> Italy <a href="http://www.gabel.it">www.gabel.it</a> †											
Passo	190	66-113	2	N	Y	Al	TC	●●1/2	●●●	T-shaped plastic handgrip	30
Mont Blanc	265	64-142	3	N	N	Al	TC	●●1/2	●●●1/2	Rubber handgrip	45
Explorer	235	66-141	3	Y	N	Al	TC	●●●	●●●●	Lightweight pole; foam handgrip; padded wrist strap; both trekking and large baskets provided; cork knob on top of handgrip	85
<b>Komperdell</b> Austria <a href="http://www.komperdell.com">www.komperdell.com</a>											
Southern Cross	250	63-140	3	N	N	Al	S	●●	●●●	Polyurethane handgrip	60
Ultralight Foam AS †	255	73-140	3	Y	N	Al	TC	●●●	●●●	Foam handgrip	100
C3 Duolock	175	68-140	3	N	N	C	TC	●●●●	●●●●	Very lightweight pole; foam handgrip; textured upper shaft for better grip; women's and antishock models also available	140
<b>Leki</b> Germany/Czech Republic <a href="http://www.leki.com">www.leki.com</a>											
Enzian	255	67-145	3	N	N	Al	S	●●	●●●	Plastic handgrip	100/pair
Makalu Ultralite CarTec Antishock †	240	67-135	3	Y	Y	Al	TC	●●●	●●●	Smaller diameter shaft; cork handgrip	200/pair
Super Makalu Ergometric Long †	270	71-140	3	Y	Y	Al	TC	●●●●	●●●	Soft, easy-to-adjust foam handgrip	250/pair
<b>Life-Link</b> USA <a href="http://www.life-link.com">www.life-link.com</a> †											
Rainier	270	91-132	2	Y	N	CA, Al	S	●●●	●●●	Foam handgrip; friction zone for all-weather adjustment; insulated wrist strap	100
<b>Macson</b> Taiwan <a href="http://www.macson.com.au">www.macson.com.au</a> †											
Macson Trek-King	325	69-143	3	Y	N	Al	S	●●	●●	Rubber handgrip; wrist strap with buckle adjustment	50
<b>Pacerpole</b> Taiwan <a href="http://www.pacerpole.com">www.pacerpole.com</a> †											
Pacerpole standard	325	67-137	3	N	Y	Al	TC	●●●●	●●●●	45° angle, plastic-moulded handgrips for left and right hands; neoprene sleeves on upper shaft; wristcords; rubber end-caps; mesh storage bag	200/pair
Pacerpole carbon	240	65-131	3	N	Y	C	TC	●●●●	●●●●	As above	240/pair
<b>Swix</b> Italy <a href="http://www.swixsport.com">www.swixsport.com</a> †											
Horizon	270	120-155	2	N	N	Al	TC	●●	●●	Soft, double-moulded rubber handgrip; large baskets as standard	140/pair
Horizon Trekking	280	76-145	3	Y	N	Al	TC	●●	●●	As above	200/pair

● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent Weight is for a single pole, including the basket provided Antishock, angled handgrip: No, Yes Shaft material: Aluminium, Carbon, CA chrome alloy Pole tip: Steel, TC tungsten carbide Twist-lock adjustments, standard baskets and wrist straps included unless otherwise stated † not seen by referee The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made

## Correct use and adjustment

Unfortunately, some people use trekking poles like a Zimmer Frame: extending their arms in front of their hips makes walking slow and hard work. To get the most from your poles, you first need to adjust them to your height. The principle is that you should not be raising your hands much higher than your waist. In a standing position, with the elbow bent at a 90° angle, the forearm should be parallel to the ground. The shaft height is adjusted so that the hand can then naturally grip the handgrip. The shaft should be shortened for uphill walking and lengthened for going downhill. On a traverse, shaft lengths should also be adjusted so that the downhill pole is longer than the uphill pole.

Adjusting the straps is the next critical step. Most people just grip the handgrip, but this can become quite tiring and limits the poles' capabilities. Correct adjustment is exactly as for cross-country ski poles. With the pole in an upright position and the wrist strap held out horizontally, the hand should pass through the strap loop from below until the loop rests on the back of the wrist. The hand gently grips the handgrip and, importantly, the handgrip sits between the thumb and forefinger. The webbing between thumb and forefinger should sit snugly on the strap just as it emerges from the handgrip. The strap should not be too long or your hand will flop out as you push backwards.

When walking, downward pressure is placed on the strap section that comes out of the

handgrip. This technique allows you to continue pushing on the strap even when your hands are behind your hips. The hands should remain close to the body and the arms should swing naturally through with elbows bent. Over time, you can build considerable rhythm and cadence as you become more proficient.

## Weight

The weight given in the table is for a single pole, including the standard baskets provided by the manufacturer. Weight is not a significant factor unless you are going fast, lightweight or on extended walks. The lightest pole in this survey weighs 175 grams and the heaviest 325 grams. If you are lifting and planting poles for up to eight hours a day over a num-



ber of weeks, the saving of 150 grams can reduce fatigue.

### Minimum and maximum length

Most collapsible poles have a mark indicating the limits to extension. This should never be exceeded, as doing so will affect their strength, durability and function. Poles that use twist or FlickLock adjustments allow a broader range of usable pole length. Twist-lock adjustments are more compact and generally reliable but can be difficult to adjust with gloved hands and in icy conditions. FlickLock adjustments are easier to adjust but tend not to work as well in wet and icy conditions. They also become loose easily and if not regularly tightened are prone to collapse. Binary and pin-style adjustments allow incremental or 'stepped' adjustments but have the disadvantages of limiting the usable range and sometimes failing to lock in icy conditions.

## Buy right

The following are things to consider when buying trekking poles.

- **Intended use:** be clear about the intended use of your poles. Do you need lightweight, insulated poles for high altitude and snow use on an extended trip, or poles for the occasional walk? Do you need larger snow baskets for back-country snowshoeing? Basically, the decision comes down to whether you need to spend more on quality or on features.
- **One or two:** buy two poles, as two give optimal performance when walking. You can always leave one behind or lend it to a friend.
- **Try:** take the poles for a walk around the shop and check for comfort and feel, particularly of the handgrips, wrist straps, weight and swing. Check features including antishock and angled handgrips, and whether they suit you.
- **Pole length:** check whether the minimum and maximum lengths of the poles are suitable for your height. Will you need to pack the poles away into a bag or your rucksack? Three-section poles collapse to a shorter length but cost and weigh more. They also have more moving parts.
- **Test:** check the rigidity of the poles and that the adjustments lock effectively.

Some manufacturers make poles for shorter people and in women's sizes. These tend to have a smaller handgrip and a shorter minimum usable length.

### Antishock

Antishock is a feature in some poles. A spring inside the pole reduces the amount of jarring on hands and wrists, particularly over rocky terrain, thereby minimising strain injuries and fatigue. When descending, antishock allows you to gently absorb the load of your body and pack on to the springs before stepping down. Antishock is preferred by older walkers and those with pre-existing lower limb in-

juries. It is particularly useful when descending. Younger, fitter walkers tend not to see the benefit of antishock, preferring to save the extra weight and cost. It is difficult to pass judgement on antishock as some people swear by it while others think it a gimmick.

### Grips and straps

Handgrips are made of a range of materials. Cork is the lightest and moulds to the shape of your hand, but it is less durable. Some poles have rubber or foam round the top part of the shaft for extra insulation, allowing the pole to be gripped lower down, even in the cold.

Handgrips may be set at an angle of five–90° to the shaft. This compensates for the tendency to use the grip instead of the straps, as the angle forces the tip of the pole to remain behind the feet. Some people prefer angled handgrips, but the majority of the poles on the market have straight handgrips.

There are two interesting variations to the angled handgrip. The first is the Pacer Pole, with specially moulded, hand-specific, plastic 45° handgrips. The hand rests comfortably on the grip, giving more control over the placement of the pole. The other style, a T-shaped grip, is found on Gabel's Passo. This is a more traditional European style of handgrip that makes the trekking pole more like a walking stick.

Most trekking poles have straps that are simple to adjust—either a two-piece strap with a buckle or Velcro adjustment, or a single loop that feeds back into the handgrip and can be adjusted by pulling on one end of the strap. Padded wrist straps provide greater comfort, particularly when used correctly. Wrist straps should be simple to adjust with gloves on with a minimum of fuss.

### Shaft material

The three main shaft materials used are aluminium, chrome alloy and carbon fibre. Aluminium is the most common of these, and is light, stiff and relatively strong. Stronger grades of aluminium are available but are more expensive. Chrome alloy is a slightly heavier, stronger, cheaper but more flexible material, providing good shock absorption. Carbon fibre is very light and strong with little flex. However, poles made of this material are more vulner-

able to damage from a side blow, hence the need for greater care.

Aluminium provides the best trade-off in terms of cost, weight and strength, and is the material of choice for most pole manufacturers. Where high performance is required, either for light weight or low flex, carbon fibre is best. Chrome alloy is a good choice for the budget conscious, as it provides good energy absorption over hard ground despite its heavier weight.

Insulation can be an important consideration, particularly if you are using your poles in the snow, as poor insulation can lead to frostbitten fingers. Carbon fibre poles and cork handgrips provide the best insulation.

### Pole tips and baskets

All poles are fitted with either steel or tungsten-carbide tips. The latter are more durable and provide bite on hard surfaces. Increasingly, poles come with the option of a rubber tip or tip cover. These reduce jarring and are more environmentally friendly as they don't leave behind holes in soft ground or scar rocks.

Nearly all poles come with trekking baskets—between four and six centimetres in diameter—as standard. These are wide enough to provide support on hard-packed snow and mud but small enough so they don't snag easily on ground cover. Most manufacturers provide wide sand/snow baskets as an optional extra.

*A display of poles:  
left to right, the  
Gabel Mont*

*Blanc, Black Diamond  
Spire, Swix Horizon,  
Komperdell C3 Duolock,  
Leki Makalu Ultralite  
CorTec Antishock  
and Fizan Trek Tour.*



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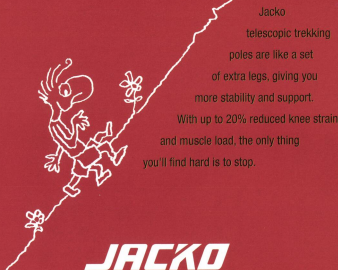
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## Maintenance

Trekking poles don't need a lot of maintenance and most parts can be replaced. The main thing to remember is to clean and dry the inside of each pole after use to prevent the aluminium corroding and the locking mechanisms inside the pole sticking. FlickLock mechanisms need to be tightened with a screwdriver from time to time as they do work loose.

## Durability

I have assessed durability in terms of the strength of the materials used, the amount of flex in the shaft, how well the locking mechanism works and the quality of other materials such as straps and handgrips.

## Value

This is a subjective assessment of value for money for each pole. The main criteria are the number of features, the materials used and the performance you would expect to get from the pole.

## Other brands available

Brand	Distributor	Contact
GMA Elemental	GMA Elemental	1800 882 058
Jacko	Anasco	(03) 9471 7500
La Sportiva	Intertrek	(02) 9476 0672
MSR	Spelean	1800 634 853
Outdoor Expedition	Rays Outdoors	1800 641 867
Petzl	Spelean	
Roman	Roman Camping	(02) 9516 1510
Salewa	Intertrek	
Tracks	Spelean	

## Other features

Any specific features are noted in the comments section of the table. These include optional extras, and knobs on the tops of handgrips, which allow greater comfort when exerting downward pressure with the palms of the hands.

## Price

Unless otherwise stated, the price given is for a single pole. As can be seen in the table, some manufacturers only sell poles in pairs.

Zac Zaharias has been climbing, skiing, bushwalking and mountaineering for more than 30 years. He now divides his semi-retirement between running his consulting business and travelling around the globe pursuing cross-country skiing, trekking and mountaineering. He is attempting Gasherbrum I (8068 metres) in the Karakoram in Pakistan at present.

This survey was refereed by Mathew Farrell.

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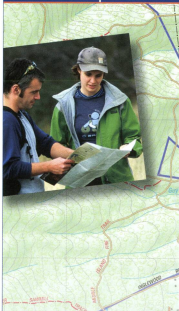
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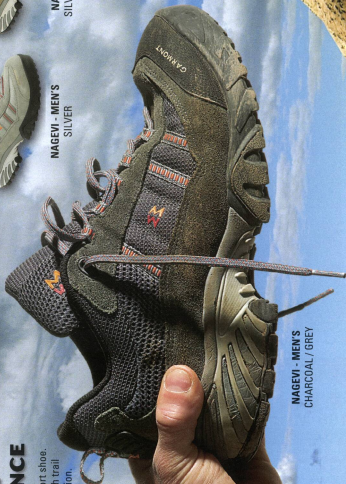
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waterproofing and foot comfort,  
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with it's PU wedge for superior  
shock absorbing under the foot.  
The Echo's lacing is extended  
to the toe and is equipped with  
"Speed Lacing" system, with  
lanceloops and metal hooks, for  
a perfect fit every time.*



## Filter torque?

Being a bunch of bike-riding greenies, we get very little opportunity to talk about pistons at *Wild*. This has all changed with the new **Vario Filter** from **Katadyn**, which features dual-piston action to produce 'the fastest microfilter in the world'. Still no talk of torque, but it does make for 'high performance with utmost ease of use', filtering water at a rate of up to two litres a minute. If that doesn't make you hot under the bonnet, the Vario also features three stages of filtration with optional pre-filters for use in either dirty or normal water—these extend the average cartridge life to around 2000 litres. The filter removes water-borne bacteria and cysts, while the carbon core reduces chemicals, pesticides and the bad taste in water. Contact **Outdoor Agencies** for more information; phone (02) 9438 2266. The Vario Filter retails for \$229.95.



*The Katadyn Vario Filter leads to tech talk.*

## Seeing the light

Apparently there are still some heathens out there who haven't been converted to LED technology. Before we throw you to the lions, here's a last chance to renounce your heresy. New from **Princeton Tec** is the **Apex Pro**, a headtorch with one 'Maxbright' three-watt LED and four 'Ultrabright' LEDs for proximity lighting, all of which are power regulated and come with four output levels, as well as a safety flashing mode. Two lithium CR123 batteries give a burn time of 35 hours; all ready to go, the torch weighs only 173 grams. **Outdoor Agencies** distributes this headtorch; RRP \$189.95.

Further tempting you from your paganism should be the aptly named **Black Diamond Icon**. This nifty headtorch also has one three-watt LED and four super-bright LEDs, again for ambient lighting, and its three AA batteries provide up to 164 hours of burn time. A NiMH battery, which can be recharged simply

by plugging in the battery pack, is available as an optional extra. The Icon weighs 188 grams and comes with battery-power indicator lights. Distributed by **Sea to Summit**, phone (08) 9221 6617 for more information. RRP \$129.

*The Princeton Tec Apex Pro might just be your saviour.*



## Tent time

For those who like to head out in winter when they really should be at home watching *Friends* repeats, we have two new tents to keep you warm in a storm. First up is the **Spire 2** from **Mountain Hardware**. This little beauty is

a compact expedition tent made for two people, designed with a high strength-to-weight ratio, a neat footprint to fit in tight spaces and twin vestibules for gear. With beefed-up poles and the patented Evolution

Tension Arch, this tent not only sounds techy but will withstand all the mountains can throw at it. The weight comes in at a paltry 2.32 kilograms, while the RRP is a slightly more healthy \$799. Contact **Mountain Hardware Australia** on (07) 3114 4311.

Second is another rugged little mountain tent from a new entry to the Australian market, **Rab**. The **Summit Extreme** is a two-person, single-skin tent made from highly breathable Exchange Lite eVent fabric. Like the majority of single-skin tents, this one is pitched internally. Most intriguing are the thirsty-sounding 'shock quencher' guys. This cute tent weighs in at 2.1 kilograms; RRP \$1095. For more information go to [www.bogong.com.au](http://www.bogong.com.au)

## KNICK-KNACKS

### In the Dryzone

Perfect for bedwetters and bushwalkers are the new products from Dryzone: the Shoe Dryer and the Storm waterproofing range. The Shoe Dryer contains 'Dampire' crystals, said to absorb moisture without any application of heat or wind: ideal for a night in the outdoors after a damp day. Heat-sensitive footwear is said to last for longer as you'll no longer ignore the warnings and pop it by the fire...The crystals are then easily regenerated using heat or by strapping them to the outside of your pack to dry. Storm Shield is a product said to provide waterproofing and resistance to oil and stains for all clothing and fabrics. Unlike similar products, it cures at room temperature: this apparently makes it more abrasion resistant and gives it the ability to 'self heal' overnight after being damaged, returning to its original condition. Magical! We suspect that there may be limitations...For more information contact Rucsaac Supplies on (02) 6686 3388. The Shoe Dryer's RRP is \$29.95, while Storm Shield retails at \$13.95 (75 millilitres) or \$21.95 (250 millilitres).

### Jesus creepers

Continuing their penchant for bizarre names, Chaco have released a new sole, the Unaweep, for their range of sandals. Unlike that Luddite the Unabomber, these new soles embrace technology, with a BioCentric footbed, Vibram durability, self-cleaning lugs, and a weight that is 20 per cent less. The Unaweep is designed as a hybrid sole, suitable for both water and land sports. RRP for the new range of Chaco sandals begins at \$169.95 for the Z1. Speleean distribute Chaco sandals; contact them on 1800 634 853 for more information.

### Light is right

Do you drill holes in your toothbrush? Do you smile smugly as you invite people to feel the weight of your pack? If the answer to both these questions is yes, then you might be interested in Sea to Summit's new range of titanium cutlery. This comes in the old

# How to get great tasting lightweight hiking food.

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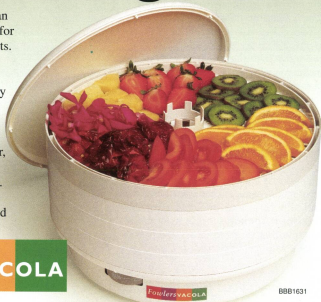
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## TRIX

### Like a baby's bottom?

#### *Karmen Teakle on smelling sweet in the bush*

Upon the beach of pristine Lake Tahune, Tasmania, I happened upon a bushwalker having a tub with a dish of water and a bar of soap. To my query of 'Where are you planning to dispose of the sudsy water?' she replied: 'I won't tip it in the lake, I'll toss it on the plants.' 'Well,' says I, 'the plants up here are very fragile and they don't like your soapy water either'.

So I shared with her my little bush-friendly hygiene trick: baby wipes—about three or four per day, carried in a snap-lock bag. One for face and neck, two for underarms and one for southern central regions—for a four-day walk, take 16 wipes. Take a spare snap-lock bag to carry used wipes out again. Chuck in a couple of extras and you can have an all-over tub up when you've finished your walk, and go back into town smelling like a baby.

*Wild* welcomes readers' contributions to this section; payment is at our standard rate. Send them to the address at the end of this department.

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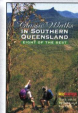
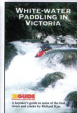
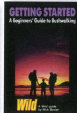
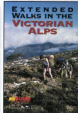
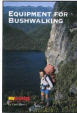
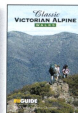
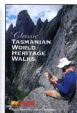
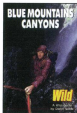
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# Tasmanians say no to pulp mill, and logging

The Gunns pulp mill proposal slumps to a new low, by *Vica Bayley*



The scene inside the Albert Hall, Launceston, on 1 April during the rally protesting against the Gunns pulp mill. John McLaine. **Right**, cable logging of Strickland Ridge, in the upper catchment of Launceston's domestic water supply, north-east Tasmania. Wolfgang Glowacki

The debate that is the proposal by Gunns for a native-forest fed, polluting pulp mill in Tasmania's Tamar Valley took a spectacular turn for the worse in March. Gunns pulled the pulp mill project from the agreed and accepted assessment body, the Resource Planning & Development Commission, stating that the process was 'all too hard'.

In its place, Premier Lennon rammed legislation through parliament that fast-tracks approval of the mill with limited scientific scrutiny and without public involvement or independence. This move is a blatant misuse of legislative power, an erosion of due process and a serious attack on democracy. Over successive weeks many thousands of people protested this move by a government apparently more committed to corporate profit than to the public interest. In Launceston more than 3000 people attended a rally, spilling out of Albert Hall and closing the street.

The Commonwealth will be in a pivotal position on the Gunns pulp mill proposal. It

must decide on the environmental assessment process—in particular, whether to hold a full public inquiry with hearings. A key issue will be the impact of logging native forests on threatened species, especially in north-east Tasmania, which is to supply up to 3.5 million tonnes of woodchips a year for decades to come.

Meanwhile, the taxpayer-funded assault on Tasmania's World Heritage value forests intensified over summer with logging and road building in highly contentious old growth forests just outside the boundary of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA). Despite considerable community opposition, Forestry Tasmania bulldozed ahead with logging operations in the Upper Florentine, Styx and Weld valleys.

Across northern Tasmania, despite climate change and the deepening water crisis, logging of domestic water catchments continues. Many rivers have been closed to agricultural



irrigators as they are running dry, and algal blooms flourish in domestic reservoirs, but for logging and plantation establishment in steep upper catchments it seems to be business as usual.

## ▲ Act now

The Federal Government will soon carry out its own assessment of the pulp mill proposal. Visit [www.wilderness.org.au/pulpmill](http://www.wilderness.org.au/pulpmill) to find out how you can help to reinforce the point that this pulp mill is not a positive part of Tasmania's future.

## Meanwhile in the south, an update from Ben Morrow and Jenny Weber

The on-ground defence of Tasmania's southern forests continued during autumn with ongoing actions in the Weld Valley and a permanent presence maintained in the Upper Florentine. In February a new attack on free speech was launched by Tasmania's state-owned logging agency, Forestry Tasmania, when it served a Supreme Court injunction and writ aimed at halting the Weld Valley campaign. The purpose was twofold: to force the Huon Valley Environment Centre (HVEC) to halt a planned walk-in and to end all support for nonviolent protests in the Weld Valley. If the writ succeeded, HVEC committee members, general members or 'agents' wouldn't be able to provide housing, first aid, food or transport to individuals involved in protesting.

The case was withdrawn by Forestry Tasmania during the hearing after a CD containing a large volume of hastily drawn-together Internet evidence was deemed inadmissible. The disc contained material found by trawling environment and forest-protest web, blog and video sites in an attempt to find evidence of a conspiracy to cause economic harm to the corporation. Forestry Tasmania was

ordered to pay costs of around \$7000, as well as its own.

The Florentine blockade has effectively prevented logging operations in the southern part of the valley for more than five months and has been the base for a number of direct actions. It was raided by more than 40 police and forestry workers on 21 February, with 16 arrests made during the next three days. A complex system of new structures has been built to prevent the proposed devastation of the area.

Large areas are being closed off for logging in Tasmania's southern forests: in the past few months, three legally-binding exclusion zones have been placed over entire valleys to prevent the public from visiting the Weld, Denison and Upper Florentine. The destruction is set to continue out of sight throughout winter. For more information, visit [www.huon.org](http://www.huon.org)

### ▲ Act now

**Let your elected representatives know that these World Heritage value forests deserve and require immediate protection. You can also visit the Florentine blockade and show your support—it is on the main tourist road to Lake Pedder.**



Angelic action for ancient forests at the edge of the massive Weld Valley public exclusion zone. Matthew Newton

## Alice in Wielangta

**Margaret Blakers reports on recent developments aimed at circumventing the ground-breaking legal ruling**

'When I use a word', Humpty Dumpty said to Alice in *Through the Looking Glass*, 'it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less'. In the same spirit, Prime Minister Howard and Tasmanian Premier Lennon agreed on 23 February to change the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement (RFA), an alteration they can make without reference to parliament. They were attempting to circumvent the December judgement that found logging of Wielangta forest near Hobart to be illegal because of its impact on threatened species (see Green Pages in *Wild* no 104).

Clause 68 of the RFA previously said that Tasmania 'agrees to protect' listed threatened species. Now it simply states that the Commonwealth and Tasmania 'agree' that threatened species are already protected by reserves and management prescriptions. This flies in the face of Justice Marshall's judgement. He concluded that the three species below are not protected by reserves, and that:

It is unlikely the State can, by management prescriptions, protect the eagle. As to the beetle and the parrot, the State must urge Forestry Tasmania to take a far more protective stance in respect of these species by relevant management prescriptions before it can be said it will protect them. On the evidence before the Court, given Forestry Tasmania's satisfaction with current arrangements, I consider that protection by management prescriptions in the future is unlikely.

It remains an open question whether the amended RFA actually nullifies the Wielangta decision, although logging of high conservation value forests such as the Weld, Florentine and Blue Tier continues. RFAs elsewhere in Australia have not been amended and the broader implications of the Wielangta decision remain, including the need to look at all impacts of proposed actions and to consider recovery as an integral part of protection.

As expected, Forestry Tasmania has appealed almost every aspect of the Wielangta decision. The Commonwealth attempted to become a full party to the appeal but lost a challenge brought by Senator Brown on 13 April. As a result, as in the original trial, the Commonwealth and Tasmania will be restricted to intervening on specific aspects of legal interpretation. The appeal will be heard later this year.

Forests are back on the agenda in the lead up to the federal election and the Commonwealth, like Alice's White Queen, seems capable of believing six impossible things before breakfast. How otherwise could it simultaneously launch a \$200 million global forests and climate initiative, aimed at preventing illegal logging in Indonesia, and try to overturn the Wielangta judgement on illegal logging in Tasmania?





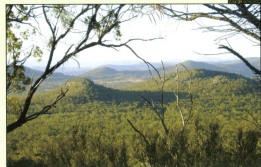
# Carrying coal from Newcastle...

**Georgina Woods** outlines coal developments, and opposition to them, in New South Wales

A recent editorial in the *Newcastle Herald* raised questions about the economic future of the Hunter region in the 'post-coal era', indicating the shift in community attitudes towards the coal industry over the last two years. But we are not in a 'post-coal era' yet. Controversial new mine proposals, such as the Anvil Hill and Moolarben projects, have generated charged public debate about the local and global impacts of an industry that, until recently, has enjoyed almost unqualified support. That



*Camberwell coalmine is a relatively small open-cut mine north of Singleton, NSW. Left, Anvil Hill (centre left) will be an island, surrounded by a mine bigger than any currently operating in the Hunter Valley, if Centennial Coal's proposal is approved.*  
Both photos Steve Phillips



support has waned, largely due to the rapid expansion of the coal-export industry currently under way.

In the Hunter region and Gunnedah basin, around 15 new coalmines are at various stages of the planning and approval process. In April, following a barrage of media stories about an industry-generated 'bottleneck' in Newcastle, the State Government approved a third coal loader that will export an additional 66 million tonnes of coal per year, and the expansion of an existing terminal. Together, these projects will double coal exports from Newcastle. Our coal exports already produce more greenhouse-gas emissions than all of NSW's domestic emissions combined, including those from agriculture, transport and electricity generation. The expert panel investigating the new coal loader recommended

that a cumulative impact study be undertaken into the effects of the coal industry, and that a levy of \$1 per tonne be imposed on export coal to fund transition industries and studies into the health and environmental impacts of coal. It is yet to be seen whether these recommendations will be acted upon.

Opposition to the industry is not based solely on concerns about climate change. Last year, thousands of hectares of Leard State Forest in the Liverpool Plains were clear-felled for an open-cut coalmine. Leard is one of the most diverse woodlands left in a bioregion recognised as a national biodiversity hot spot, containing large remnants of several endangered ecological communities. The Anvil Hill proposal also entails clearing 1200 hectares of native vegetation.

Along with the impacts on regional biodiversity, river health and the global climate, reasons for the backlash against the coal industry include abuse of public interest and process. As more and more information comes to light showing that NSW coal reserves are rapidly being exhausted, that rivers and woodlands are under threat, and that coal exports are fuelling climate change, questions are being asked about the divergence of public and private interests, and about whether the near future is being sacrificed for the vanishing present.

Mounting community criticism of the rapacity of the coal industry, and the cynicism of governments in buttressing it, is having an effect. To initiate the post-coal era is a mammoth task but, with so much at stake, there isn't an alternative.

## Choppers in the wilderness

**Geoff Mosley** reports on Tasmanian aircraft issues

Helicopter overflights in the wilderness zones of Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park are becoming a matter of increasing contention as chopper activity at the northern end of the park intensifies. According to ranger staff at Cradle Valley, under a 'Fly Neighbourly Agreement' approved by the minister, a company based at the airfield north of the park makes about 12 flights a day to a landing site in the Granite Tor Conservation Area. The flight route approved for these visits takes the helicopters over the wilderness zone on

either side of the Overland Track, and exposes walkers to the noise from each flight for about five minutes.

The management plan for the TWWHA acknowledges that bushwalkers are likely to believe that their solitude has been spoilt by the noise from such aircraft, and (under)states that 'the use of aircraft to gain access to remote parts of the World Heritage Area is generally incompatible with the recreational experience sought by on-ground visitors to such areas'.

According to Chris Bell, president of the Tasmanian National Parks Association (TNPA), in a letter to the *Mercury* on 3 March, the matter came to a head when the TNPA was advised by the National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) that the operator had been 'mistakenly' landing in the World Heritage Area instead of the Conservation Area. Aircraft landings and overflights are both in fundamental conflict with the aims and benefits of wilderness areas and have no reasonable place in them.

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Image: the western face of Mt Geryon, Tasmania. Our alpine and sub-alpine regions are especially at risk from global warming



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# Logging in the garden state

Firebreaks—break laws? *Sarah Rees and Jill Redwood ask the question*

Deep in the heart of Victoria's Central Highlands wilderness, a vast fire-containment line 200 kilometres long and up to 70 metres wide has dissected forests and national parks, cutting through pristine ecosystems. These highway-sized scars traverse

spot kilometres ahead of a front calls into question the effectiveness of using the break to backburn into wet forest. Victoria's Environment Minister, John Thwaites, has been unable to support this measure as having any scientific basis. However, the logging

catchments haven't burnt yet is that they contain vast, undisturbed old growth forests. The bulk of the state's forests have been logged in the last century, transforming them from moisture-rich, diverse old growth forests to fuel-heavy, thickly regenerating tree crops of the same age and height: they have become even more fire prone. 'Control burning' is not the answer; we need sensible forest management that isn't dominated by the logging industry's demands.

## Salvage logging by Jill Redwood

Just as the logging industry stopped clear-fell 'salvaging' Victoria's High Country forests burnt in the 2003 fires, another massive fire consumed more of the state's forests at the end of 2006. The Bracks Government has given \$22 million to the logging industry to facilitate post-fire logging of recovering areas, and granted it unfettered access to a further 12 000–20 000 hectares



*Logging debris piles up as the firebreak makes its way along the boundary of the Yarra Ranges National Park. Right, a sign on the Buchan Road, East Gippsland.*



mountains and ridges, including the habitat of nationally-listed endangered species such as the Leadbeaters Possum and Baw Baw frog, with some areas clear-felled and the logs sold. Both of these actions are in direct breach of federal and state laws.

The bark and other vegetation have been piled into endless house-sized mounds to decompose, risking further ignition. Last February, one of these piles was struck by lightning. The fire was so intense that bulldozers and other firefighting equipment were unable to get near it. It is proposed that the final firebreaks be permanent and run for 600 kilometres, ostensibly 40 metres wide but in practice likely to be closer to 70 metres in width. Remarkably, maps of this vast proposal aren't publicly available and there isn't a process for public consultation.

The aim of the firebreak is to buffer Melbourne's water catchments against the future threat of a bushfire. The fact that bushfires

industry has taken massive volumes of very high-quality timber.

After the 2003 bushfires, the Victorian Auditor General investigated the theft of thousands of tonnes of logs from the Snowy River National Park. He was highly critical of the process that allowed this to happen, and of the clear conflict of interest in hiring a logging company boss to oversee the backburn line (see *Wild* no 98). It appears that the State Government is now happy to oversee the very same type of looting operation.

There isn't any scientific literature that supports backburning in wet forests as they already contain micro-firebreaks such as fallen wet logs, luxuriant damp understorey and rainforest gullies. These combine to cradle our water catchments. Prescription burning these forests will dry out and destroy the very attributes that impede fire.

The scientific community has suggested that the most likely reason why Melbourne's

of trees burnt last summer. This means ash forests will be logged at ten times the sustainable rate just when they are in an exceedingly fragile state. Scientists agree that clear-felling a forest that is trying to recover from a fire is extremely damaging to the ecosystem, soils and wildlife.

At the end of 2006, the Japanese export woodchip facility at Eden in NSW celebrated a first: one million tonnes of woodchips exported in one year. This record volume was due to the clear-fell 'salvage' operations in Gippsland's fire-damaged forests.

It was revealed on a 'Four Corners' programme on ABC television in March that backburns lit by government fire officers had engulfed at least 100 000 hectares of forest in Gippsland, threatening several towns. Since then, large areas of ash within this zone have been declared 'fire damaged', allowing them to be rapidly clear-felled now.



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# Tourist developments continue to threaten Tasmanian National Parks

Robert Campbell details proposals for Recherche Bay and Pump House Point

In 2004 the future of southern Tasmania's picturesque Recherche Bay became a national conservation issue when local landowners proposed logging part of the north-eastern peninsula. Site of the 1792 French expedition, and described as the most important French historical site in Australia, this area was saved from logging in February 2006 (see Green Pages in *Wild* no 101 for an overview). It is somewhat ironic that an area outside the adjacent Southwest National Park has now been protected, whereas an area within the national park and possessing similar cultural and natural conservation values is still under threat.

Property developer David Marriner's company Stage Design Pty Ltd is soon to begin construction of a 60-cabin development along the southern coast of Recherche Bay. After opposition led by the TNPA, the main lodge has been relocated to a private free-

hold block, but the cabins are still to be within the national park. The area was originally protected by the TWWHA Management Plan but, in an indictment of the government's pro-development stance, this plan was amended to allow the resort to proceed. The TNPA's call for the area to be declared a Heritage Area has been rejected, despite the fact that the heritage values associated with the French expeditions were not assessed as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment.

Yet another tourist development is being proposed at Pump House Point, on the shores of Lake St Clair and within the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park. A consortium is soon to lodge a development application with the Central Highlands Council, while a development site plan will also be released by the Tasmanian NPWS. A period of public comment will be available for both.

TNPA opposes these developments, arguing that tourism benefits can be achieved by locating such developments outside national parks. The establishment of successful tourist nodes at Strahan and Cradle Valley, to name only two, validates this view. The management plan for the TWWHA, within which both proposed developments are situated, backs this stance by encouraging 'the provision of accommodation in nearby townships and areas adjacent to the WHA' and says that 'if adequate facilities or services exist, or can be developed outside the WHA that meet visitor needs, such facilities and services will not be provided as concessions within the WHA'.

These developments set a very worrying precedent: until now, new private developments have not been allowed inside an already established national park in Tasmania.

## Woodchips

### Politics of change?

The NSW National Parks Association reports that the Labor Government was comfortably returned in the election on 24 March despite a state-wide swing against it. The government's return has led to a number of changes. Previous Minister for the Environment Bob Debus has retired from politics, and the new member for the Blue Mountains, Phil Koperberg, is his replacement. In what it is hoped will be a significant gain for the environment, Koperberg now oversees an expanded portfolio called Climate Change, Environment & Water. This covers the previously segmented areas of native-vegetation protection, private native-forest logging, water flows in rivers, endangered species on land and sea, and climate change policy. In the Upper House, the NSW Greens gained a new position and had another member returned, taking the number of Greens from three to four. The ALP doesn't have a majority in the Upper House in its own right, which will force it to cooperate with either the Greens, the Coalition, the Christian Democrats or the Shooters Party. It will be interesting to watch with which parties Labor chooses to align itself.

### Dead like the dodo, extinct like the thylacine...

According to Tasmanian Greens Senator Christine Milne, a leaked memo from Tasmania's Department of Primary Industries & Water states that devil facial tumour disease will spread to all Tasmanian devil populations on mainland Tasmania within five years. The disease has wiped out 90 per cent of popu-

lations in some areas, with no chance of recovery, leading to fears that the iconic animal will be extinct in the wild within 20 years.

The autumn 2007 *Potoroo Review* reported that, three weeks before the Victorian election in November 2006, the government approved an aerial poison-baiting trial in Gippsland. This followed on from a 'dummy run' using transmitters to investigate whether quolls would be affected (reported in Green Pages in *Wild* no 100), in which no quolls were found. The poison trial aims to reduce wild dog numbers, but is likely also to lead to a decrease in the already endangered quoll population.

### To the rescue!

Michael Snedic reports that Rainforest Rescue has purchased its ninth rainforest property in the Daintree region, north-east Queensland. The new property is a rectangular block of 2.12 hectares located in a rainforest residential precinct, one block away from the national park. The main ecosystem is listed as 'of concern', with a nearby area listed as 'endangered'. Contrary to popular belief, despite national park status and World Heritage listing, the Daintree is not fully protected. In the 1980s a rural residential development of more than 1100 private blocks was established over much of the Daintree lowland rainforest; the vast majority of these blocks have since been purchased privately. Rainforest Rescue aims to buy blocks of freehold Daintree rainforest with the highest conservation values where development is still permitted. The land is bought and placed in purposely created and gazetted nature

refuges. For further information, visit [www.rainforestrescue.org.au](http://www.rainforestrescue.org.au)

### Forests Forever

Two plant species considered to be critically endangered, *Pomaderris virgata* and *Pomaderris costata*, were discovered during the 25th annual Forests Forever Ecology Camp in East Gippsland over Easter. The first plant has only been found in two other, very small populations in Victoria and is extremely restricted in NSW. The discovery of these rare shrubs in an area scheduled as a logging zone is evidence of the lack of surveying done by the State Government before an area is destroyed by clear-felling.

The four-day, annual event is organised by Environment East Gippsland to help people explore the region's threatened forests. This year ecologists, fungus experts, wildlife biologists, a rainforest botanist and a forest campaigner led around 150 people on walks and tours from a base camp at Goongerah.

### Foxes out

According to the autumn 2007 *Potoroo Review*, the Tasmanian Government has launched a ten-year, \$56 million strategy to rid the island of foxes. The survival of eastern barred bandicoots, bettongs and eastern quolls would be threatened by a well-established fox population in Tasmania, while many other species would also be under serious threat. ●

Readers' contributions to this department, including high-resolution digital photos or colour slides, are welcome. Items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, VIC 3181 or email [editorial@wild.com.au](mailto:editorial@wild.com.au)

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## REVIEWS

### Take a Walk in Northern Territory's National Parks

by John and Lyn Daly (Take a Walk Publications, 2006, RRP \$29.95, [www.takeawalk.com.au](http://www.takeawalk.com.au)).

This, the seventh in the Dalys' Take a Walk series, describes 128 short strolls, day walks and overnight trips throughout Northern Territory parks and reserves, from well-known Kakadu to the remote, extraordinary landscapes of the proposed Limmen National Park. Details of local history, Aboriginal background and the environment are included for each area. Walks are attractively illustrated with colour photographs and a map—and, for some, a gradient profile. Routes are clearly described, with details on access, safety and special requirements. However, as the maps don't show contours, separate topographic maps are needed for the more challenging trips. The Larapinta Trail is included in its entirety. I was glad to see the authors stress the possibility of experiencing substantial rain in Central Australia. In A5 format, of sturdy construction and easy to open, the book lends itself to use on the track. It's an ideal companion to a car camping trip in the Northern Territory, as well as for longer adventures in Australia's Top End.

Meg McKone

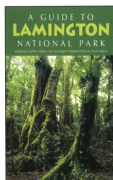
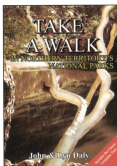
### A Guide to Lamington National Park

edited by Lesley Hutley (Envirobook, 2006, RRP \$29.90, [www.envirobook.com.au](http://www.envirobook.com.au)).

Visitors to south-eastern Queensland's Lamington National Park who want in-depth explanations of the natural history of the area will find this book very useful. It is a collection of articles by different authors on a wide range of topics and provides information not readily found elsewhere. The graded walking-track descriptions are detailed, with specific notes on flora and fauna found on particular walks. This publication is an excellent reference work on the park.

Gary Tischer

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Z1 Black



Z1 Zinc



Z2 Storm



Z2 Brick

## Womens



Z1 Basil



Z2 Heather



ZX1 Bluebell



ZX2 Blush

More than skin deep,  
the appeal of Chaco footwear is comfort and fit.

### BioCentric™ footbed

Nearly 80% of the population over pronates, leading to foot discomfort and added stress on their bones and ligaments. With the assistance of a certified pedorthist, we designed the contours of our footbeds to control pronation and maximise performance. Our BioCentric™ footbed ensures a supported, comfortable stride in any activity and, as a result, has been awarded the Seal of Acceptance® by the American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA).

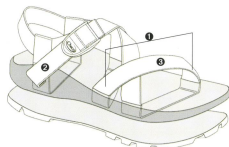


- ① Aggressive arch support controls pronation
- ② Sculpted heel cup centres the foot's natural shock-absorbing pad under the heel bone
- ③ Heel riser increases lateral stability
- ④ Multiple widths ensure proper fit

→ Gender-specific design accounts for subtle width, length and volume differences in men's and women's feet

### Adjustable fit

Since 1989, all Chaco sport sandals have featured our anatomical pull-through strap system. This system provides complete adjustability to maximise fit, while eliminating the bulk and stiffness of overlapping Velcro®.



- ① Anatomical strap placement cradles the foot at the first and fifth metatarsal bones for biomechanical fit
- ② Continuous pull-through straps and adjustable buckle-strap conform to any foot shape
- ③ Soft polyester webbing dries faster than nylon and maintains a consistent fit in all conditions

\* The APMA Seal of Acceptance is intended to raise consumer awareness by identifying products of exceptional quality that are manufactured with comfort, health, and safety in mind.

All Chaco Sandals have been awarded the Seal of Acceptance by the APMA.

Exclusively distributed in Australia by Spelean Pty Ltd.

Call 1800 634 853 for your nearest stockist.

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